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HENRY HILLIARD.

HENRY HILLIARD:

or,

THE THREE COLLEGE FRIENDS.

L O N D O N :

S. W. PARTRIDGE, 9 PATERNOSTER ROW

MDCCCLXVII.



HENRY HILLIARD ;
OR
THE THREE COLLEGE FRIENDS.

CHAPTER I.


•

“THE FALLEN LEAVES THAT KEEP THEIR GREEN.”

“Thy face will shine
Upon me, while I muse alone ;
And that dear voice, I once have known,
Still speak to me of me and mine.”

BESIDE a dull fire in a college room sat a student on a rainy afternoon in November. The fluttering of the occasional flame, as it caught an inflammable chip or stray bit of unconsumed coal, the ticking of a little clock high up on the wall, the sighing of the wind, and the monotonous plash of the unceasing rain which gave no quarter to the trampers in the streets—such were the only sounds.

The student had sat there thinking for hours. There are times when our thoughts overpower the most pressing business in the world; just as there are other times when the dulllest act of daily routine must be attended to, though a life's sorrow seems to hang in the balance. There are fearful times when we must part from a death-bed at the stroke of the business hour, to carry, through a day of maddening length, the spectral picture of the glazing eyes we may never see open again. This was one of the days when thought had its own way, and all the world was forgotten. A severe examination awaited Henry Hilliard next morning—a trial of strength, final and decisive, against those who had for two years been his rivals in a neck-and-neck race for distinction. But thoughts that were peremptory, and would not be put down, asserted their sway this afternoon; and upon the table Greek classics and lexicons, Latin plays and dictionaries, lay open and unheeded, as hours slipped past—precious golden hours, which should have been



devoted to labour, but which saw no labour done.

Motionless he sat there, and, with his chin upon his hands, and his elbows on his knees, gazed into—through—the little fire, which flickered so quietly in the old-fashioned grate;—gazed, and saw pictures of the past there, brighter than anything which that little fire, unaided by imagination's colours, could produce—pictures of the dear old times on which this 28th of November imperatively made him ponder. And, as the afternoon shaded into the deeper gloom of the late November evening, Henry rose, and, lighting his lamp, turned, with a sigh of exhaustion, to the books upon the table. But Pericles' speech could not, with all its knotty points, attract the young scholar that night; and closing his Thucydides impatiently, he pushed all the books to the far side of the table, and opened the desk which lay there, cautiously, tenderly.

Who is there that has not, in desk or private press, one secret drawer or secret shelf which is sacred to self and to me-

mory? Henry Hilliard was no exception; and this was one of the evenings when his feelings had sobered down to a tone suitable to the luxury of opening that secret drawer.

He took out a packet—a very small packet—of faded letters, written on foreign paper;—

“Those fallen leaves that keep their green;
The noble letters of the dead:”

And you might have seen him handle the treasured bundle as though it had been just dug up at Pompeii, and was likely to fall to dust at a touch. Poor fellow! It is not, perhaps, fair to tell what goes on behind the scenes. But authors are privileged persons. Well, old letters are kept to be loved; and perhaps if their faded lines are all so blurred, it is with tears and kisses.

It took the student two long hours to read through the packet, small though it was; and he did it very quietly, neither sighing, nor exclaiming, nor impatiently frowning, as it is said, in stories, readers

of important letters invariably do. And when he had done, they were all put back as quietly into their secret drawer, and the desk was locked once again. He had, as he had often done before, taken out his idols, and paid his homage at their shrine. But they were not read to bring near to him the face of one far off on earth, whom he should see again. These fallen leaves that kept their green, were the letters of the *dead*. His homage was quite innocent *now*. He had been laughed at, and even rebuked for it, while she was still on earth: the most prudent parent could see no harm in his keeping those dear old letters now.

But this act of homage was very different from many another which Henry had paid at that shrine before. As the same landscape assumes different features according to the light that rests upon it, so do many often-repeated acts of our life. The same words, read or spoken under various circumstances, may convey impressions completely opposite in each case. The same verse of poetry or of Scripture may wring

tears from us now, and seem empty and meaningless when we hear them next.

When Henry Hilliard had put his treasures by, what was it made him fall down at the chair where he had sat that long afternoon, and, covering his face in his hands as he knelt, burst into a passion of tears? Ah, there are, in some lonely students' breasts, other thoughts than those of Greek tragedies and Latin verses. Many carry an unrevealed tragedy in their hearts; and, sitting for hours at their unsympathizing books, pass through struggles which the world knows nothing of. But thus are they made men. "To believe, to suffer, and to love," are elements in our training essential to our success, but unrecognised in College calendars or University classrooms. Suffering and loving, Henry Hilliard certainly was. Was he *believing*? That, or a question like it, was what rocked this young man's soul to its centre. Was he *safe*? *That* was the thought, in the light of which the reading of those letters assumed so unusual a character on that 22nd of November, 1857.

CHAPTER II.

MARY DESPARD.

"Oh, blessed vision, happy child,
That art so exquisitely wild !
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years."

WE must be mysterious no longer. People do not like to see things through a veil. But the teller of stories often presents his figures in shadowy outline before he makes them stand forth distinctly on his page, as the face in the camera is obscure until it is focussed. Let us do our best to bring this dim outline of Henry Hilliard into proportion and relief.

Twelve years before, a child of eight years old, he had been playing on the lawn of a fine old country-house, with half a dozen young companions as frolicsome as himself. But Henry, not quite so strong as others, and sooner tired, had separated from

the rest, and was playing, beneath one of the trees, a game of his own devising. He was observed there, as he sat, by a bright girl two or three years older than himself, who, leaving the rest, went to the spot where she saw him alone, lest, as she thought, he should be either huffed with some one, or perhaps too tired to romp with the other children. Mary had quite a talent—even at ten—for making people happy; and she chose the place where she thought she could give pleasure, rather than where she would receive it. Such was Mary Despard at ten. Explain it as you will, she found it, even at that tender age, “more blessed to give than to receive.” The two children sat down under the gnarled oak tree that summer day, and as the landscape “simmered in the heat,” and the other merry children tired themselves with races and blindman’s-buff, Henry Hilliard and Mary Despard indulged in as serious a talk as children of that age are able to do.

“Henry,” said the bright, black-eyed

girl, "which do you like most, to read stories about good children or bad ones?"

A master of fencing might have parried this leading question, lest it should be turned against him by his fair inquisitor. But not so the boy of eight, who, raising his eyebrows, said archly, "Mary, I suppose I ought to like the good children; but, oh, the bad ones are so interesting! I think it is so stupid to be stuck-up and good, and all that."

The association of "stuck-up" and good was new to little Mary, who had been brought up, so far, to think religion a very bright, happy thing. So she said—

"Whatever, Henry dear, *can* make you say that? Do you think papa and mamma are 'stuck-up' because they are good?" And the large, wondering dark eye seemed to read the soul of the little culprit, who had confessed that he did in his conscience vote for the stories with the bad boys in them.

"Whenever I read of a good child, it's sure to die. And then, you know, the end


comes so soon and so sad. But the bad boys get into a fix, Mary, and get thrashed, or run over with a cart, or nearly drowned in a mill-pond, or some fun like that."

Mary could not quite take in his point. But, in her innocent love for what was good, just because it was good, she resolved to press him still closer.

"Now, Henry, which would *you* like to be, a bad child or a good child? Not in a book, but really here, under the tree?"

"I don't know. I suppose it would be more fun to be——. Ah, no, you mustn't cry:" for the tears were in little Mary's eyes, and she would not let him say he would like to be the naughty boy of the book.

"Oh, Henry, Henry, I'm glad I love God; I'm glad I'm one of His lambs: for it makes me like to be good; though, to be sure, it's rather hard sometimes, if big people laugh at you, that ought to know better. Don't you think, if you were one of the lambs of the flock, you would be very happy?"



“Well, I’m sure I don’t know,” he replied, undecidedly. “Any way, I think I’ll try; for I know you wouldn’t say what wasn’t true.”

Her eyes gleamed with pleasure, and she said in her heart she would try to make Henry Hilliard one of the lambs of the fold.

And so she did try.

CHAPTER III.

A LAST RIDE.

“But, oh, the heavy change! for thou art gone,
For thou art gone, and never to return!”

THAT was long, long ago. But Henry remembered it all that night, and a great deal beside. Remembered days which were not childish ones, when, for the love of that face and those eyes, so much brighter than any one else's, he would be by her side at a picnic, or country walk, or long and pleasant ride, and when the boy of fourteen delighted to be the knight of Mary Despard. The two families, the Hilliards at the Copse, and the Despards at Eddersley, were like near relations. Very seldom did a day pass without some communication between one house and the other. There was a great deal of romance in the intimacy of some of the younger members of the two houses—old-standing alliances between the little girls

of one and the little boys of the other : but still there was a difference, which could not fail to make itself felt between the tone of the two. Let us make no secret of the difference. The family of Eddersley were happier than the family of the Copse. There was a certain calm and peace about the faces of the father and mother of Mary, which might be looked for in vain upon those of Henry's parents. This calm and peace which were written on the brows and eyes and lips, came from another source than wealth, or position, or health. It was "*the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,*" that placed the crown of joy upon those honoured heads, and Mr. and Mrs. Despard saw no reason for making a secret of the fact. They could never imagine why the man whose heart's best treasure is in heaven, should not be just as ready to speak of it as he whose heart is in the bank, or in broad acres, or in the pride of ancient family and unspotted name, which were the special boast of the Hilliards. But with all this plain declaration of religion,

there was no approach either to self-righteousness, or to a puritanical severity. There was *gladness* in their souls as real, and as plainly to be seen, as that of the child who has a good, kind father, and who feels it has no reason to dread his presence. And so it came to pass, that though the Hilliards made no profession of religion, beyond that usual one of going to church once on Sunday, and having family prayers, which were read with scrupulous punctuality by Mr. Hilliard; yet the two families were most excellent friends, because the Despardes sought to recommend by their conduct the faith they loved, and felt that it is the business of the Christian to attract to his Master those who are strangers to him, by "love, joy, and peace; by long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith; by meekness and temperance;" by all the characteristics, in short, of true Christian principle—the characteristics which shone most nobly in the face and heart of Christ.

Mary, at sixteen, was the Mary of the last chapter, ripened in faith and love as

much as in years and stature. It could not be denied that she kept the boyish heart of her young admirer fast in her keeping; but she did not waste that precious possession.

"You are going to school again, Henry, next week, aren't you?" she asked, when they were out for one of their rides, and were now just returning by the back avenue of Eddersley.

"Yes, more's the pity. I never enjoyed holidays so much—*never*:" and he bent one of his looks of boyish admiration on her. She was used to them.

"And you'll be away—four—five months: shall you not?"

"Don't remind me of them—horrid, tiresome times—only boys to talk to. Oh, I wish there was no such place as school, Mary."

"Will you make me a promise, Harry, *this* time? You said you would not promise it last year. Will you promise *me*, and—for my sake," she said, earnestly and unabashed, looking full in his face, "that

every day you will read the Bible alone for a little, and *every* day pray to God to give you His Spirit, and make you His child?"

"For *your* sake? Well, for your sake—yes, Mary. I think I would do even more than that, if *you* asked me."

"Whatever you do it for, oh, Harry, do it. I don't think boys can do without the Lord's blessing a bit better than girls; and I'm sure I should lose my temper, and do harm to God's cause, if I didn't try to keep near Him every day."

"I wish this horrid avenue was longer. Is this the *last* ride?"—and Henry, dismounting, led her pony till they reached the yard, where he helped her to alight, and bade her good-bye.

But her words made little impression. How much seed is ~~lost~~, that is sown thus in love and prayer—nay, not lost, except in seeming. It all grows in the end, and is reaped somewhere, and by some one.

Two or three years only strengthened ~~this~~ young fanciful love. Few boys are

altogether without some similar page in their history. But a sad hour came—let us tell it briefly. Letters began to come and go, and many a long letter in schoolboy hand found its way to Mary Despard. Yet she was not like many: these letters were all shown to her mother, and over Mary's answers both mother and daughter prayed. Mary was delicate—increasingly so. They advised a winter in the South of France. You guess the rest. Well it was so. Doctors often order that remedy when they have no more excuse for keeping their patients at home. And the letters grew less and less frequent, although more and more earnest, until at last there was, mingled with much of sisterly love, a touching, beseeching earnestness of entreaty, that Henry would come to his Saviour in time for Mary to hear of it; and in the same envelope, a line from Mary's father, saying that for several reasons he thought it best that this frequent letter-writing should cease. They were growing out of childhood now, and besides it was a strain upon

Mary's mind and strength to write much. Henry should hear of his daughter's health through their parents. This note Henry trampled under foot in a rage. The letter in that careful handwriting, breathing such love for his soul's salvation, he prized as if it had fallen from heaven.

Between hope and fear, and wildness of excitement, he wrote his last letter to her, and entreated for one line more. But another Hand had interposed; and ere that letter reached its destination, Mary had "gone up higher," to see her Saviour, and reap the reward of the faithful labours that, in her own way, she had been given grace to perform.

Such is the explanation of the conduct of Henry Hilliard, on that November evening in his college room. Four years had made no change in the entire reverence which he bore for her memory; for not yet had boyish admiration been eclipsed by any brighter light.

CHAPTER IV.

COLLEGE FRIENDSHIPS.

"In vain, th' averted cheek in loneliest dell
Is conscious of a gaze it cannot bear;
The leaves that rustle near us seem to tell
Our hearts' sad secret to the silent air:
Nor is the dream untrue, for, all around,
The heavens are watching with their thousand eyes."

IN the features of the young student of
— College, whom we have introduced
to the reader, there was no lack of manly
beauty. But the attraction of his face lay
rather in the settled thoughtfulness it exhi-
bited, than in the regularity of feature or
form. He had entered College well, had
recommended himself to his examiners from
the first, had set before him, as the object
of his ambition, a first place at his final
examination, and had given every reason
to his class-mates to expect that he would
make good his determination or desire—to
be *first*. This was the absolute goal of all

his wishes ; he saw, beyond the taking of a degree, nothing—he desired to see nothing. He had chosen, and meant to choose, no profession. He did not need it in order to support himself; and he had not learned, neither did his father tell him, that employment brings with it happiness, and that occupation is a better thing than the enjoyment of unearned wealth.

And so, for several years, he had worked, in friendly but resolute competition with others ; and now the race was almost concluded, and there were many, beside his father, his tutor, and himself, who felt keen interest in his success.

For the past two or three months Henry Hilliard had not “been himself,” as he termed it. That light heart had not sat at a continual feast. He could not exactly tell what had come over him, but he felt a restlessness in mind and body quite strange to himself. Lying awake for hours after going to bed at midnight or later, thoughts would go backward to former days, and sometimes onward to what should be in a

score of years to come, and he felt dissatisfied. He could not explain to himself either the nature or the cause of the state of his mind; and therefore, of course, he could not tell how to remove it. Tossing on his bed with half-feverish restlessness, as he dozed, he would now be in Troy, and see the well-greaved Grecians, rallying round their mighty champion, make one more fruitless effort against those impregnable fortifications. In a moment more he would be at school, his former playmates by his side, and a vision of companions who had done him no good, would come at midnight, and try to torment him. Once or twice these scenes took an uglier aspect still: in dreams, half-waking, he saw the Orcus which the ancients drew, but coloured more terribly by hues drawn from the Bible picture of the future world of woe. He saw the burning bush, and Moses in terror beside it, his shoes laid carefully aside. He saw the heights of Horeb, and deep lurid gloom, and smoke and darkness; and he felt cold and shivery, and woke, rest-

lessly to slumber again. He began to hate his sleep, for it was not rest.

Such, you say, was the result of over-working and late hours. We partly agree with this account of Henry's state, but not wholly. There was another cause at work. What gave that colour to his visions? Whence the image of the burning bush, the burning Horeb, the burning place of woe? The mind that was working so had never sought, and therefore had never found, any place to rest upon, when dark and dismal thoughts of "future account" arose before its vision. Fully aware, absolutely convinced, that upon this world a storm of judgment is yet to be poured, devouring all who have not fled from that coming tempest, and taken refuge beneath the "shadow of the Almighty," Henry was as fully certain that he was not of that happy number, nor did he know how to change his own condition.

So often, therefore, as an idle moment gave him time to think, or a sleepless hour forced feverish reflections through his mind,

did these terrible imaginings, half feigned, half real, assault him. Now in Troy, now at school, now at Sinai, now——. Oh, what was it all for? He had, more than once, thought of giving up his reading, believing that this would give his brain ease.

Let it not, however, be gathered from our description, that these new and strange thoughts either interfered with his ordinary daily occupations, or appeared upon his countenance, so as to be seen by his companions. For the most part they were reserved, as we have said, for the long, waking hours of night.

Henry had no lack of College friends. There is no portion of life during which more generous feelings fill the soul of the man than during those College days, to which he afterwards looks back with so much happiness. Amongst others, Henry had opened his heart to two fellow-students, Mordaunt and Exham, who might have been described, so great was the difference of their characters and dispositions, as


Black and White. Mordaunt was dark in countenance, dark in hair and whisker and eye, short in stature, and not particularly polished in manner. He could, however, "make friends" with whom he wished, so great were his powers of conversation, so keen his intelligence. He could cut an enemy in pieces with satire—he could make a friend weep with sympathy. Exham was not a mere contradiction of Mordaunt, but he certainly formed a wonderful contrast to him. You saw it in the quiet, subdued manner, in the fair face and high colour, in the gentle and refined way of speaking. He was no idler, but had never gained College honours, except for a prize poem of gentle harmony, and describing rural felicities.

How did these two gain a hold alike on Hilliard? Henry had within his breast that which could sympathize more or less with each. He had a dark corner not often visited, but, when visited, not easily left again. He had his moody, melancholy

moments, such as Hamlet sketches in some of his reflections upon himself. But, far more, he had his sympathies given to what was lively and kindly. He had, till very lately, no deep knowledge of anything but the bright side of thought and life. But he was beginning to discover that life is a great mystery—that he who has not an object in life can have no answer ready for the inquiry hereafter, “What hast thou lived for?”—and that to live for nothing is a gross injustice, and a fearful mistake. A sort of philosophy seemed to run through Mordaunt’s conversation; he was therefore often courted as a companion by Henry. But the philosophy of kindness and good sense was proper to Exham, who was, therefore, far oftener his companion than was Mordaunt. This was the order of strength in these three minds—Mordaunt, Hilliard, Exham. The first commonly influenced the second; the second, the third: but we like both those who impress us, and (still more) those whom we impress. Man loves

to be moulded by man ; still more to mould another.

Among Henry's rivals for the approaching examination, Mordaunt held no mean place ; and expectation stood silent, not promising confidently on the claims of either. Mordaunt said, " You will get it, Hilliard ;" and Henry said, " You are the man."



CHAPTER V.

THE TWENTY-EIGHTH OF NOVEMBER.

“Oh! I have pass'd a miserable night,
So full of fearful dreams, of ugly sights,
That, as I am a Christian, faithful man,
I would not spend another such a night,
Though 'twere to buy a world of happy days,
So full of dismal terrors was the time.
Oh! then began the tempest of my soul!
I passed, methought, the melancholy flood
With that grim ferryman that poets write of,
Unto the kingdom of perpetual night.”

KING RICHARD III.

THE reader will probably say to himself,
“When are we to get back to the 28th of
November, and to the thread of the story?”
Now.

We saw Henry Hilliard kneeling before
his chair, his head in his hands, and his
whole frame shaken with emotion. What
was it all for?

It was a crisis of the human soul. It
was a scene upon which from heaven, we
believe, angels look down with interest—

the *struggle for possession* of an immortal being, when God and right and truth draw one way; but evil, and all the force of habit, self-love and worldliness, are heavy weights to drag the soul in the opposite direction. Oh! bitter sometimes is that struggle—needlessly bitter, when the soul which might, will not, believe. It is said there is no more exciting and interesting sight than that of life and death battling, in a sea storm, for possession of the poor sailors flung upon the waves by the swinging rigging of the sinking ship. We have no hesitation in pronouncing more interesting, and, if seen by others able to sympathize, more exciting still, the struggle between a greater life and a greater death for the possession of souls in as imminent a danger, when life has not as yet gained the victory. And let us think of it. How like the two cases! Oh! rather, how like is the case of an immortal soul, living unconscious of its high calling, and ignorant of its imminent and terrible danger while still unsaved by God, to a man sleeping in a

sinking ship; the berth in which he lies just about to be engulfed in the waters, and to drag him down to the deep. Oh, who shall wake the slumbering soul!—who shall cry “danger!” into the ears of that man who lives without God, and, unknown to himself, is hasting on with terrific speed to a future too terrible to attempt to paint, and yet too certain to be lost sight of for a moment!

As the day of trial approached, and the mind of Henry Hilliard, instead of becoming more highly strung for the conflict in the examination-room, grew more nervous and unsettled, he was to be pitied indeed. Wakeful nights, or nights broken by such feverish dreams as we have sketched, are no fit preparation for that effort. And, this evening, it seemed as if all had given way. The day of the month had suggested the reading of these letters: their perusal had given new force to the anxieties which were daily taking more definite shape within his bosom. Into his wild and beating heart the voice of one now long lost, but not yet

forgotten, had spoken again, saying, "Look to Jesus: all is well if you trust in Him." And here he knelt upon the hearth with passionate earnestness, and resolved to look to Jesus. "It shall be," said he, "now or never. I must get settled enough for to-morrow. Something must be done to quiet down thoughts which will be fatal to success—something, too, to banish those dreadful anticipations which shock me now so often when I take a look forward. O God, help me! I *do* look to Thee. I *am* a sinner, I think. I want peace from thoughts of death and judgment."

And burning tears of unutterable pain and hope flowed fast from eyes already reddened with night work. But prayers which go up from a heart merely selfishly seeking for peace, that work may be pursued and troublesome horrors got rid of, are not such prayers as are heard on high. The longing for rest was not with him a longing for deliverance from sin—its power, as well as its guilt. He had horrors, but not abhorrence of the evil within. *He did*

not know he was a sinner. He mistook the throes of conscience for the working of conviction. And if, rising restlessly from his knees, when the fire was out, and the grate cold, and the oil of the lamp just wasted away, he felt no better, no happier than before, that was the reason. Henry, like a thousand more, had demanded salvation for (as he supposed, because he used the words) Christ's sake. But salvation from what? From the *punishment*, but not from the *guilt and power*, of sin. He wanted a sop for conscience—something to still it, that he might go on as he was before. He was not one who came “hungering and thirsting after *righteousness* ;” therefore he was sent empty away.

In this dissatisfied, worn-out frame, he retired to his bedroom ; but, as usual, sleep was not to be found. The cold, long hours went on. Each added to Henry's pain. His head ached. His brain reeled. When he opened his eyes, fiery objects swam before them in the blackness : when he closed them, they pained him even more.

And so he lay as the dark hours crept on. Nine o'clock would come, he knew, in its course; but could he hope for any change between this and then? He rose from his bed as five o'clock struck, and, kneeling down beside it in the cold, deliberately prayed that all this state might be removed—that *something* might give him ease. He was like a sick man in the night going into a laboratory to take *something* to cure him. Oh, how hopeless, how *dangerous* the act, if he knows not his disease, and the true remedy for it!

CHAPTER VI.

A TERRIBLE WAKING.

"Sorrow, touched by thee, grows bright
With more than mortal ray ;
As darkness shows us worlds of light,
We never saw by day."

SEVEN o'clock struck, and at its stroke, as usual, the old College servant knocked at the student's door, and knocked again. Not receiving the customary sleepy answer, "All right," the kind-hearted old woman looked in, and to her astonishment found her master stretched, or rather crouched, on the floor, hardly supported by the low bedside, and apparently asleep. The morning was one of winter's severest. The ice was hard without, and the very water in the bedroom was frozen. Yet he lay there, stiff and motionless. She cried aloud, and he heard and moved, and sought to get upon his feet.

“Where am I? Is the examination bell ringing? Mag, what o’clock is it?”

“Oh, Master, Master, you be blue with the cold. What’s come on you to be out o’ your bed such a morning as this, and asleep after that fashion?”

Henry stared, but did not seem to comprehend her meaning; and his head dropped again upon the bedside. She went to him, laid her hand upon his forehead, and felt what she had felt on students’ brows before—the fire in the brain, that told the tale of anxiety, and midnight reading, and young powers not prostrated, but overtasked. She needed to be told no more to perceive that he was in for brain-fever.

And so it was. All his hopes were shattered by that enemy of ambitious students, who has so often snatched the prize from the hand just opening to grasp it.

It was many days after this scene we have just described before Henry opened his eyes again in perfect consciousness, and saw the faces of his parents, who were both sitting in his room, quietly watching, as

they had done for many a long hour, without rest.

“Mother!”

“My own boy!”

“What brings you and my father here? What has happened? Oh, what day is it? Is the degree examination——?”

“Stop,” eagerly said his mother, as she began, in a woman’s tender and sensible way, to turn his thoughts into the most quiet channels. And he was submissive, from utter weakness.

But Providence favoured his case, and his recovery was as rapid as his seizure had been sudden. When they told him all, his only cry was the exceedingly bitter one—

“The labour of five years is gone. I should have been first in that examination. Oh, it is bitter! It is a cruel fate that took the cup from my very lips!”

They thought so, but made light of it, and proved to him that such wailing could mend nothing, only do him harm. Mr. and Mrs. Hilliard knew of no higher comfort

than this. And he was gently removed, within a few days, to his own country home, to spend the winter vacation there.

How often the designs of Providence, which seem to go straight against us, are planned to lead us on! How often, when we think God acts to harm us, it is "His goodness which leadeth us to repentance!"

That was a dull winter at the Copse. Very, very different from the old times, when rides and long talks with Mary made the days go so happily on. Henry felt little pleasure now in meeting Mr. and Mrs. Despard, who, nevertheless, sought, in every way, to make up for the absence of the lost counsellor by kind words and acts, intended to win the poor discontented young man to quieter and wiser thoughts.

But in vain they set before him, that in the snatching of an expected triumph from his very grasp, the great Ruler of all things acted not as men act—that it was neither unkindness nor chance, the two causes to which men, for the most part, set down their misfortunes.

"You say," petulantly replied Henry, "that God desired to make me love Him?"

"Yes, it is certain that He desires this."

"And will you tell me that *that* is the way to effect it?" he asked, with something like a look of pity on their ignorance.

"Indeed I will," said Mr. Despard. "Storms as well as calms are needed to conduct the course of nature. God makes the earth fruitful by other agencies than sunshine and smiling springs and summers alone. Thus, too, it is with grace. It is marvellous the variety of the agencies which He employs to lead men to Christ, the Light of life, out of their natural ignorance."

"I see no force in the analogy. You merely illustrate. You do not prove."

"Surely, Henry, *you* should not forget your 'Butler,' to say nothing of the common sense which lies at the root of his argument. If God, who rules nature, brings the harvest to perfection in love, by the help of a hard winter, to break the clods of earth, and *then*, after that, by

smiling sunshine and gentle showers, you will not deny that we may expect the like conduct in His gracious government."

"It may be so," said Henry, beginning to warm to the argument, and to resist it less, as the thought of its applying to himself began to pass from his mind. "Indeed it is an interesting analogy. Seed cannot even be sown, much less grow and fructify, unless the hard earth be broken with frost, crushed with rollers, torn with harrows, burned to rid it of weeds, ploughed to soften it. So, I suppose, He may deal with human hearts, before He sows His seed."

"So, my dear Henry, He is dealing with *your* heart. *I am sure of it.* I see plainly that He has snatched your prize from you to give you something better."

"He has snatched," said the young man, with emphasis, "more than *one* prize from me that I counted upon; and He has not made me one whit better. . . ."

"But don't you know—oh, *when* will mortals learn, that they must be *emptied*, *absolutely* EMPTIED, before God will fill

them. Christ comes as he came to the man who had lain *thirty-eight years* by the pool of Bethesda; he comes to their help when all other helps fail."

"I shall believe it when I *see* it," said he, trying to stop the discussion.

"Blessed are they who have *not seen*, and yet have believed," returned the man of God, grasping the youth's hand, and concluding, "Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest *believe*, thou shouldest *see* the glory of God?"

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CHAPTER VII.

WILLIAM EXHAM'S STORY.

"BACK again, old fellow! We greet you well!" was the welcome of Mordaunt to his friend, as he returned to College after the winter vacation, and once more was "one of them."


"But you, Mordaunt, what are you back for? I thought you were to be off to India, or some of the ends of the earth, after your degree?"

"After my degree! My dear Hilliard, I no more took my degree than you did. We shall be up for it again together next year."

Henry marvelled; but the reason for this he could not wring from his eccentric friend. Whether design or accident had brought this about, he could not learn.

"And William," he added, turning to Exham, "what of you?"

"Oh, I took mine, but I am to stay on



another year. I have not done with College yet; and, to tell the truth, I have made up my mind to go, if God wills, into the ministry."

"But, my dear fellow, you look pale and anxious—are you *well*?" affectionately inquired Hilliard.

"Perfectly—that is, *almost*," said he, with a sigh and a smile. "But, oh, Hilliard, I have gone through a great deal since you saw me. I have a great many things to tell my old friend:" and he cast a shy look to Mordaunt, on whose dark countenance a grim smile had crept up, till it was all distorted with a satirical expression, which added nothing to its comeliness.

Henry took the hint, and they managed to escape from the atmosphere of irony—as men will do when they have any heart-language to speak.

That afternoon they were walking arm-in-arm round and round the park, deep in converse. Let us draw near and listen.

"Henry, I have longed for you to come back. Though I do not think you will

exactly feel with me, you are too true a friend not to feel for me, when I tell you about myself. I am a new man. Your old friend is changed entirely in the most essential way. I am not what I was; for I WAS SIN'S SLAVE, AND NOW I AM CHRIST'S FREE MAN." He said it in a joyous, buoyant way, as though he triumphed in confessing himself "a new creature."

Henry winced. "Religious talk," he soliloquized. "This won't do." But he went on, trying to appear interested, with a cold "How has this come to pass?"

"You have heard me speak of my dear mother. I am not ashamed, Hilliard, to talk of my mother. A gentle woman—not a strong mind, except strong in love. She was a——"

"*Was?* Oh, William, is she——?"

"She is—in heaven, dear Henry. I am almost alone upon earth, for I have had neither father nor brother for years. One sister, but no one else to call my own. We are poor; but what of that? That is not what I wished to say."

"I did not know you were in mourning—in the College cap I could not have seen it."

"I was by her death-bed. She spoke of none but Christ. I asked her was she afraid to die. She looked at me in wonder. 'I cannot understand you,' she said. 'Is a sailor on a troubled sea afraid when first he sees his own dear land again?' I thought it very strange, and I asked her was she afraid to leave Lizzie behind. Again she said in wonder, 'Why? Whom shall I fear? of what shall I be afraid?'"

"And your sister?" began Hilliard.
"What of her?"

"Oh, I wanted to tell about *myself*. My mother got me alone by her bedside, and she told me much I scarcely knew before. 'William, you are moral. You are a good son. You have avoided the world's temptations, and stood firm against evil. You have read your Bible. You have said the prayer I taught you. But—ARE YOU SAVED?' She looked through and through me. I could not bear the

look, but I laid my head on the bed, and muttered, 'No.' For I felt—though I did not know it before—that I was *not*. 'Not saved! If so, *what?*' she asked, pressing her hand into mine; 'if so, *what then?* Lost!' I felt she was right. I never felt it before. I thought my morality was the high road to heaven. In one awful moment it flashed upon me that I was on the high road to hell."

"Come now, come now, Exham, talk more reasonably," said Hilliard, getting very uncomfortable; for he felt that the dying lips of Mrs. Exham were appealing to him through those of her son.

"My old friend, Henry," said William, affectionately, "don't talk thus. I know better. There is nothing so unreasonable as unbelief. There is nothing so inexcusable as *moral ungodliness*. Oh, that you knew what I know now!"

"What is that?" asked Henry, fearing to wound his friend's feelings, and, with all Exham's strange talk, feeling drawn to him like a brother.

“Will you let me tell it to you? Henry, I know this, that I was blind—I was lost. My morality and virtue, which people used to call exemplary, were *my excuse for not seeking God*. They did not prepare me for receiving Him; they stood as buttresses to my pride. I am glad I was not immoral; but sorry, how sorry I cannot tell you, that I trusted in morality so confidently and so long. I found by the bedside of my dying mother, that I was lost. My sins came upon me with awful weight and reality. I could not look back to one day, one hour, without sin; and I said to myself, if I were dying, I could not speak as mother does; and I said to her, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ ‘Is that cry from your *heart*, William?’ she asked. ‘I believe it is. I want deliverance from corruption—from my vile self; I want to be like you, mother.’ “‘Come unto me,’ said Jesus, “and I will give you rest.” Come, my only son,’ she added, ‘now, before I die. I see by faith the Son of God beside his Father’s throne. He presents, as the great High Priest, the

blood of atonement which has made peace between God and man. He offers it for *me*. Oh, if he did not, my sins would make angels weep to see; but in his blood even *I* am forgiven.' Thus indirectly she preached the Gospel to me, and as she spoke, I felt it all coming home to my very soul. All my life seemed guilt. But something told me that the overflowing love of God could blot out all in that blood which Christ was presenting before the throne. 'He made reconciliation for the sins of the people,' she murmured; and as she spoke, I felt my sins were there—my sins, Henry," he continued, with a broken voice, "so great, so many. *All* gone in that moment, through the wondrous sacrifice of Jesus, which can take them away, however great, if we will but believe in him as having made satisfaction for sin by his atoning sacrifice."

Suddenly Exham stopped, and looked as if he felt he had gone perhaps too far, and might have hurt his friend's feelings. But the unworthy reason for reserve was over-

come in a moment. He knew that Henry was one afar off. He had a mission to perform. He had this soul to save; and he added almost in a whisper, bending his head lower—

“Hilliard, what my mother said to me, I must say to you. We are alone here, and no one sees us but—God. Oh, Henry, are *you* saved?”

William Exham was no hero, in the common sense of the word. But if you will believe it, there was a hero's spirit at the root of his question. It was no mere catchword which he repeated because duty called, without feeling. It came from the depths of his new-created soul. “*Are you saved?*” Did it go to the soul of his friend?

At that moment Mordaunt joined them; and Exham seeing, or fancying he saw, that Hilliard was pleased at the interruption, looked once again in his face, and slowly left the party.

Henry was rather red. He was partly excited, partly annoyed, at what Exham

had said. But on his heart the faithful, earnest words, wrung so painfully from the depths of William's soul, made no immediate impression.

William, as he passed away to go home, felt a calm deep and perfect within, such as he had never felt before. The joy of having spoken faithful words for his Master—of having confessed Christ, and allowed his light to shine forth, was great. “Ashamed of Jesus!” said he; “how can I be? That dear Friend. My Jesus, my own Saviour, oh, how can I play false to thee?” And having reached his home in George's-street, he went to his own bedroom, and turned over the pages of the Bible which lay upon his table, till his eye was arrested by these words:—

“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

“By stretching forth thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.”

And seeing the next word, he fell on his

knees, and prayed that *he*, with all boldness, might speak the Word for his dear Master, through opposition, ridicule, and shame. In that hour of higher faith and confidence, he felt elevated, like Stephen, above the thoughts of this troublesome world; and seeing all things in the light of the invisible, he felt he could do and dare anything for Jesus' sake.

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO ARROWS FROM RIVAL BOWS.

MEANWHILE very different thoughts and words were passing between Mordaunt and Hilliard.

“With the highest respect, Hilliard,” said the former, checking a laugh, “my private opinion is, that man is cracked. It’s a conclusion framed according to the strictest rules of the Baconian philosophy. A man need but observe the phenomena of Exham’s ‘renewed mind,’ to conclude that a serious cleft has been made into the cerebral matter, especially in the region of the organs of veneration and common sense.”

“I am not so sure of that,” answered Hilliard, whose natural love of opposition was aroused. “Perhaps the fool is right, and the philosopher wrong, after all.”

“But has he—oh, my friend, has he been seeking to rescue thee from thy natural

night of common sense and excellence, and industry and virtue? For my part, I think the way he dares to talk against reason destroys his claim to be heard once for all."

"But these things were learned by his dying mother's bedside," said Henry, firmly.

"Nonsense can be learned out of the Scriptures, if we read them backward," was Edgar Mordaunt's enigmatical reply.

"How do we know he may not be reading them aright, and *we* the wrong way?"

"If I thought I should ever read them as he does, I would take a vow against reading them at all."

"Do you read them at all?"

"Do *you*?" answered Edgar.

"I'm afraid you and I are in a bad way, if reading the Bible is the root of the matter. But come, away with these fancies. Tell me of your vacation. I have had as stupid a time of it as ever I spent."

"No fair friend to cheer the Christmas hearth?"

"No!" said Henry, half gruffly.

"I have, then." And Mordaunt related

with humour sundry passages of his history, which, while they made Hilliard laugh at the time, caused him to shrink back somewhat from giving his confidence to this darker character, and showed him that strong intellect is no certain guide to exemplary virtue.

"I think I shall go in; it's getting cold," said he.

"I shall be most happy to share with you the viands that a considerate parent has doubtless supplied you with on your return."

Henry would rather have been left alone, but he could not turn Mordaunt out. And thus the thoughts which William had sown in his breast were effectually turned out by Edgar. "The birds of the air came and devoured them up."

"I have been reading a capital book," said Mordaunt, over his cheese and ale. "Have you seen it? I took to it because old Hunter warned us against it in class:" and he named a translation of one of the German infidel writers, whose works were a

few years ago so freely circulated among
“young England.”

“No, I have not seen it. What is there
‘*capital*’ in it?”

“It shows up the traditional beliefs of
the age in fine style—the fancies about
revelation and inspiration, and all that. It
shows up old women’s religion nicely. And,
for my part, I am beginning to think we
shall not be much longer forced to ‘put in
chapels.’ *That* sort of thing won’t last
many years.”

“Do you mean to say that you think
religion ought to be rooted up?” asked
Hilliard, with almost as much horror as if
he had been religious himself; nay, with
more, for, had he been possessed of the
faith, he would have been calmly certain
that rooted up it *could not be*.

“Far from it; only the old-fashioned
way of thinking. Miracles must go. Pro-
phesies must go. Sacraments must hide
their diminished heads. ‘The Bible——’”

“Well, what of the Bible?”

“Much may be learned from it. It

shows well the development of the divine thought in the race. It is a good historical summary ——”

“And what, then,” asked Hilliard, unconsciously hitting upon a great truth, “what will you do for the common people, who have no philosophy, and who must have the Bible or nothing, to keep them true to God?”

“Let the common people do their best. Parsons are too strict. Half man’s pleasures are trodden down by priestcraft. All *that* must go!”

“Now, one word to you, Mordaunt. In my room you must not again talk so. Choose my friendship if you will, but give me no more of such scepticism.”

A cloud came down upon the brow of Edgar. He sneered out, “You are a nice lad to stand up for religion. *Have you any yourself?*”

The arrow, shot so unintentionally, went home. From two so different bows, and with such different aims, his two friends had each asked him, in fact, the same

question—"Are you saved?" "*Have you any religion yourself?*"

Was this chance?

It was well for Henry that Mordaunt had spoken as he did that evening. The revulsion was too strong from William's happy earnestness to Edgar's trifling infidelity. Standing between the two, half inclined to shun both, and resolving to be led by neither, Henry's better feelings, nevertheless, sided far more with those of the weaker than of the stronger mind. It was evident to him that William's belief, however ill-founded, or contrary, as he fancied, to sound sense, made him happy, and did him good. It was just as plain that Edgar's growing unbelief was doing him harm. What was the value of a way of thinking which led him to speak of the belief of centuries as of an old woman's religion? What was the value of a course of reasoning, which both ridiculed and slandered such an earnest creed as that of William Exham? What, above all, should be thought of the teaching which

described the moral restraints of religion upon the people as a priestly tyranny, which should be given up, that they might all be made virtuous by philosophy?

The studies of Mordaunt and our friend Hilliard brought them, however, into closer communication with one another than choice alone might have dictated. And William Exham having spoken, and, as he believed, fruitlessly, to both on the great question which neither of them had yet solved, referred little to the subject in his conversation when they chanced to meet. But they used both to mark him, as he crossed the squares of the College after lectures, in close conversation with other men, to whom, doubtless, if not telling the same experience that he had told to them, he was propounding in all faithfulness the same question.

Eyes began to be turned on him in ridicule: sneers unexpressed, and shrugged shoulders, whose meaning could be easily read, but not so easily answered, were freely accorded him. And the nature of William Exham was one just fitted to

suffer keenly under such treatment. There were few in his class to whom, in the intervals of work, he had not found an opportunity to commend his Master; and of them all, how sad to him the discovery, that but two or three responded, and of the rest, that but one or two listened with patience, or seemed interested in what he said.

His was not the physical frame to bear up under the strain which these labours and this measure of success brought with them.

"Speak to the unfortunate deluded fellow, Hilliard; you can do it better than I," said Edgar, one day, when they passed William in close conversation with a rosy-looking young man, who winked meaningly at Mordaunt as they crossed each other. "Speak to him, and tell him, for his health's sake, to hold his tongue—put it mildly, you know—and that you think Heaven is not in favour of suicide. It really is a shame that a man cannot keep his creed in his head, but must be always parading it in the eyes of his neighbours."

Hilliard's conscience told him that he


must have pained Exham often and often by "cutting" or avoiding him when walking with others. For Henry had seen too plainly the way the tide of opinion ran, to desire to be in any sense involved in the contempt of his friend, and had begun, therefore, to speak with him less and less.

"Exham, old fellow," said he, tapping him on the shoulder the next time they met in College, "don't be angry with me, but listen to me when I speak a word to you. You are killing yourself. You will go mad. Positively you will. With such unhappy views ——"

"Now, Henry, why do you think I have unhappy views?"

"Well, they must be so, for see how pale you are."

"Perhaps it is rather because I see too many around me who think them unhappy views, and therefore refuse, I will not say to adopt, but even to hear them. Oh, Hilliard, if you knew what it was to feel all alone, if you knew what it is to hear what



lies nearest to your heart scoffed at and abused, and yet worse, to see, that while you know the matter is vital, none will give sufficient attention to it, even to consider the claim it has upon them—and then to have a burden on one's heart of another kind, and no one loving enough to come and offer to bear part of it—you would not," sighed he, "wonder if one looked a little pale or down-hearted."

Henry felt very much ashamed of himself, and he said: "Upon my word, William, I haven't been half the man in my own estimation since I lost the benefit of your company. But to be candid with you, I did think, and do think, you carry your religion too far. Surely, it is best to keep it to one's self, and let it actuate one's *life* as much as we will."

"But what when others have not got it at all—not in the veriest *corner* of their hearts? I hope I am not very uncharitable; but I believe not one in ten that we meet here cares one jot for the loving Saviour that died for us."

“Not one in forty,” curtly replied Henry, knowing how true the words were.

“Not one in forty, then; and if these things be *true*—oh, Henry, Henry, if it is *true* that there is a heaven and a hell, that when we die, we shall all be in one or the other, and that trusting in and following the Lord Jesus is the one and only way of salvation from hell, and of entrance into heaven—*how mad*, how awfully mad beyond belief, are those who refuse him!—and how guilty is the man who knows Christ, and will not tell of him to the lost ones!”

“Still, life is above all things; and my firm impression is, you are risking your life in the vain desire to do these mocking people good. You will kill yourself, and you won’t benefit them.”

“Let it be even so, then. It may be imprudent; but tell me, my own old friend, is it *wrong*, if I have grace to try to do it—is it wrong to seek to save *some*? Oh, if I could save but one!—oh, Henry, if I could save *you*!”

And he bent on him, out of those deep blue eyes, one of his earnest looks of pity and love and longing.

"I wish," answered Hilliard, hurriedly, "I wish there were dozens like you, and then I would join myself."

"But dare you not be one—the first of the volunteers for Christ? Is Christ not fully worthy to be served, even if you served him alone?"

He pressed and plied him with the question, so that it seemed impossible to resist. But Hilliard only answered, "You surprise me, my dear fellow, the way you see these things now. But I tell you I will be your friend, and do my best to stand by you; and if I do, promise me you will keep a little more within bounds for the future."

Exham eyed him with curiosity, and said, "Have you not seen my point yet? It is *worth while*, I firmly believe, to do and dare *anything* for Christ. For any one else, I believe it would not be worth while. But anything that He sends I hope I could bear for Christ. I take no credit. He

helps me. I sometimes wonder at it myself. But it is not I that stand, but Christ. Oh, that you knew him too !”

“ You said you had some trouble to bear. Will you not let me share it ? Am I worthy of so much confidence ?”

“ I told you of my orphan sister. - Do you know that she and I live together in George’s Street, and she is very lonely, and—to tell truth—we find it not too easy to live. Lizzie has often thought whether it would not be right to try to earn something more in any way she could ; but I have promised myself that whatever I may have to do, I will not suffer *her* to live save as a lady ; and now we are sometimes perplexed. That’s the whole truth.”

How ashamed Henry felt that he had assisted in the ill-treatment of such a friend, and, through him, of the poor, lonely sister, in whom, though he had never seen her, he felt, as most young men would feel, a considerable interest. Further conversation brought out a few more facts—that she and he had been left a small annuity ; but that

against this, serious expenses connected with their mother's death stood at present; and that they knew not whither to turn just now for more.

The deep selfishness of his conduct seemed to Henry, at that time, contemptible. Was it not *sinful* that he had consorted with Mordaunt, and left this poor, weak flower to be tossed with the storms of daily life, without either sympathy or help? "Beast!" said he of himself; "I am not fit to be his friend, and here I have been condescending, on conditions, to hold the office!" And he felt at that moment, that the faith which was the support of this tried brother must have something in it. Whatever it was, it was not to be scoffed at. It could do its work in keeping him up.

And so these two hearts came together again once for all; and Henry began to learn to believe, in a general sort of way, in the reality of a faith which could be brought into such use as William's, and which led to patience and to action as well as to talk.

CHAPTER IX.

LIZZIE'S HOME.

It was with much satisfaction that Henry Hilliard, having heard of a very desirable visiting tutorship in town, got the offer of it for his friend, and brought him the note which conveyed the appointment. The work was light—two young boys of eleven and twelve; the emolument liberal, the employer considerate. It just suited Exham's case.

Henry knocked at the door of their humble house. It was one of those modern town cottages of one storey, which may be made comfortable by one who knows the secret of neatness, but which, in untidy tenancy, is unbearable from its small size and want of accommodation.

Henry was delighted at the appearance of this little house, as he stood on the steps, wondering whether he should see the sister of whom he had so often heard. He preferred giving the note to either bro-

ther or sister at home the very evening he got it, rather than waiting to give it on a chance-meeting in College.

The door was opened by a little maid of fifteen, who showed the guest into the parlour, where the brother and sister sat. "What a true *lady's* room!" was Henry's mental exclamation, as, at a glance, he took in all — the paper of the walls, the well-drawn prints that hung there, the ornaments on the chimney-piece, the book-stand in the recess, the carpet, the *tout ensemble*. And then the lady herself. She looked about nineteen, and was very like her brother. It might have been the pure Saxon blood which gave that look of delicacy to the face; the blue eyes, speaking all kindness and calm; the fair hair, so neat; the little hand, so white. Henry was pleased. He had but time to take in this at a quick glance, (and one glance of his intelligent eye took in much,) when William rose and welcomed him cheerfully, and introducing him to his sister Lizzie, invited him to stay to tea.

Henry was by no means disposed to refuse the invitation, and he made himself at home at once. They wondered possibly at his self-invitation, but no warmer welcome could have been given to one longed for and expected. William fully charmed Henry in his own home. The air of anxiety was, if not quite gone, at least scarcely to be perceived, and he seemed in his sister's presence to throw off all the pained look which he usually wore in College circles.

Before an hour was over, and under the influences of the tea-table, Henry felt as much at home as he had done anywhere for a long while. The conversation was pleasant, and showed that the sister had kept pace with the more interesting parts of the brother's study. It was evident that she added to unusual gentleness and simplicity a quick and intelligent mind, possessed of much information, and yet ever keeping herself in the background, with true feminine modesty. William smilingly begged to know whether, since they were old friends, he might ask leave to spend

part of the evening in reading for to-morrow's lecture; whereupon, with sudden apologies, Henry declared he had never remembered that his friend must have work to perform, and asked to be directed what to do so as not to interrupt.

"We generally study together, Mr. Hilliard," said Lizzie Exham. "Since my brother began theology, many of the books are easy enough for me to read with him, and I think it makes the study less lonely and lesson-like to him."

"You read aloud, then? Oh, read as usual!" said Henry. "Or stop, let me read." And an hour was spent in reading and speaking upon one of the books for the morrow. From theoretical theology, the conversation turned (as the hearts of two of the party turned) to practical topics, and William said:—

"I think, Henry, it makes such studies far less difficult, and less a mere exercise of the memory, to try to turn them to their practical use, as regards our conduct and life."

Gently, but firmly, Henry felt, that in that conversation, they laid down principles, which, undeniable in themselves, condemned him. The atonement of Christ was the topic of the lecture, and the atonement of Christ involved sin — on man's part; love — on God's part, in sending Christ to man; the vindication of His holy law in refusing to exercise *mere* mercy apart from the shedding of sacrificial blood; and, above all, absolute self-surrender for sinners' sakes, on the part of the Lamb that was slain.

"This is not a mere barren doctrine, but a wonderful truth for *us*," said Lizzie. "I like to think of it thus. I think, as you say, William, that theology does our hearts harm, if we let *them* have no part in what we learn; but that it does us good, in giving us reasons for our faith, if we take it home to ourselves."

So the evening passed, and Henry felt his respect for that pair of loving Christians, and through them for the Christianity they professed, increased decidedly by the

intercourse of the evening. In parting he had almost forgotten his mission; and it was not till he reached the street that he recollected the letter in his pocket. He returned with it, and calling out William, put it into his hand, telling him to read it at his leisure.

You should have seen the meeting of those two next day!

And Henry was glad he had atoned for his neglect of his friend, by removing their difficulties thus.

CHAPTER X.

STEPS DOWNWARD.

How strange it is to have a friend who feels *for* you, but not *with* you! How strange, above all, when the subject is the highest one in the world! How difficult for a Christian to know how to act, when he has a friend or brother who takes an interest in his faith, but does not share it! This is a common thing now-a-days. We see everywhere people who are charitable, who like Gospel preaching, who encourage Missionary Societies, who give help in influence and money to the Gospel cause, who speak with the preacher of the truth in such a manner as shows that they are interested, that they like to hear questions as to sin and salvation discussed and explained—but who stop there.

Some may say, this is going far: who could go further? What is religion, if it be not described in the terms now used?

Listen for one moment. All these good things can be produced by the *indirect* influences of Christianity in people who have themselves never felt its power on their own souls. All these things may be done, while the new creation has not yet taken place. Amiability, good education, the force of example or of habit, the encouragements of the society in which we move—these causes may produce the results spoken of; *but*—but there yet remains somewhat to do, and in that somewhat lies the root of all, without which all the rest is empty and unacceptable to God.

“All these things,” said one to Christ, “I have done from my youth up.” Was he satisfied with this test? The next sentence shows that he was not. “*One thing thou lackest: go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and be my disciple!*” This he would not, could not do. He had sufficient respect for God’s truth to *copy* its external fruits heartily and well; but he had not sufficient respect for it to stoop and put his own soul under

its yoke. He could do anything short of becoming a disciple : there he failed.

And so it was with Exham's friend in this new stage of his history. The mild, gentle influences of William's faith did good so far : they disposed Henry to respect it. But nothing more appeared as yet. Having gone so far, he stood still. And doubtless the loving Saviour, looking down upon him from heaven, said, "Thou art *not far* from the kingdom of God." But he had not entered it.

The author of a suggestive allegory tells us of a gate too narrow and too low for a man to pass through, save by stooping and taking nothing with him but himself. Humiliation is the first step to exaltation in conversion, as in everything else. And Henry had come up to that door, but there he stood still, and seemed likely to remain for many a day.

Oh, how many are standing *there* ! Crowded is that gateway with men and women, young and old, who would stand right in God's sight, but are too proud to

accept salvation on His own terms. And in the meantime, how perilous is their state! All but saved, they are nevertheless quite unsaved. The salvation of Christ is offered to them, and they perhaps admire its plan, look at it with favour, think of it, but do not accept it. Oh, if they had wisdom to do *that*!

The weeks, as they passed, brought the two friends more closely together, and it was plain that Exham was bent on showing Hilliard that the life of a Christian is a life of joy. And indeed William was so busy, what with his College studies, his tuition, and his work for his Lord and Master, that there was no place for gloom, which usually visits idle and self-consulting minds.

In proportion as this intimacy strengthened, did that with Edgar Mordaunt grow weaker. It was plain that the latter saw the changed relation between the two friends—equally plain that thereby his opinion of Hilliard's common sense, was considerably lowered. For there are always a large number of persons who look on the religion

which an Almighty Creator devised, in His highest wisdom, as quite beneath their notice, and indeed scarcely worthy of their contempt. They have, as they believe, rather too much common sense to credit what Jehovah says; they prefer to seek for light themselves, and miserably, for the most part, do they succeed. Edgar Mordaunt had been filling his shelves with the works of Newman and Theodore Parker, and all the rest of that school, whose motto is, "Believe nothing that you do not make out for yourself." His tone of mind had suffered accordingly, and in an arrogant snéer he expressed his low opinion of the religion of his fathers.

It was not often now that he found an opportunity of having a regular talk with Hilliard. But he deemed he must yet strike one blow, to rid him of his infatuation in favour of William.

"Stay!" he cried, taking Henry by the shoulder, as they passed one day. "Old friend, you are putting on the yoke early in life. Thirty or forty years hence, sup-

posing your beloved Exham is right, will be time enough to think of 'taking up the Cross,' as he poetically describes it. Why play Achates to this 'Pius Æneas,' when there may be no Dido and no Carthage to be reached in the end? The fact is, what's the profit? What do you gain? I say a *young man* has no right to put his head in the yoke. Kneeling is the best posture when age has bent your legs for you; but stand, I say, now, and inquire."

Hilliard, whom the past few weeks had rendered proof against the strain of satire which had formerly been so telling upon him, looked quietly in Edgar's dark face till he had concluded, and then said:—

"And is my friend now quite done? Supposing that kneeling should indeed turn out to be the best attitude for a *young man*, or supposing even that there is one chance in five that praying is a good thing, then what if death should come a little sooner than the calculation dates it, and finds a man 'inquiring,' with you, instead of worshipping, with Exham? Then, 'what doth

it profit?' say I, in your own words—they cut both ways. If there is a *chance* even that he is right, then those who think with you are, in my opinion, tolerably great fools for their pains. There is but one chance in hundreds that a shop will be burned, and yet no shopkeeper but a fool neglects to insure his premises and his stock. And the more the chances are in William Exham's favour, the greater the folly of taking a different road. You lose nothing if he is wrong, and you go with him; but consider *what* you lose, if he is right, and you do not."

"I am not so sure that you lose nothing, if Exham's set are wrong in the end. I maintain you do. Consider how much you must give up, if you go with the fanatics. It is all 'Don't, don't.' The Bible religion is full of trammels. 'Thou shalt not' sounds to me to be an ugly phrase. I can understand the ten commandments, of course, and I give Moses comparatively small credit for inventing them; but all our natural desires, which must have come

from God, are checked, and their indulgence forbidden. That's not fair."

"What?"

Edgar staggered a little before the question, but he said, "Flesh is flesh, and your Bible says God gave man half a score of natural propensities, and then says He will take his life if he follows them——"

"You mean—you mean," said Henry Hilliard, his high moral nature rising up, "you mean that your new creed gives you liberty to live as you please—to wallow in the mire of this filthy world! I have had enough of you"—his large eyes flashed fire in indignant wrath—"I part from you. I heard you while *your* religion and William's were merely two speculations going side by side; but now I see that the fruit of his is precious, and yours is vile. Good-bye!"—and in noble ire he parted from the man who had thus proved to demonstration that his free-thinking came from hell.

No purer heart, as we have said, beat among the children of this world than that fine heart of Henry Hilliard. Wounded in

his sense of virtue, he bade a proud farewell to the man who, had he taken a different way of speaking, might have injured him by his abstract arguments. He was safe from all the fascinations of the new school now, because he had caught a glimpse into the lurid depths of the hell of sin to which infidelity naturally tends. From that day he avoided, and soon lost sight of, his once familiar friend, Mordaunt.

CHAPTER XI.

A MEMORABLE CONVERSATION.

WITH a great sigh of relief, Henry met William Exham that same day. "I have seen the last of Edgar Mordaunt," said he, still inclined to fire up at the thought of his conversation. "He has uncovered the veiled statue which he bade me worship, and it turned out to be a hideous skeleton."

"What do you mean?" asked Exham.

"I mean this, that Mordaunt told me, or hinted, that the chief reason for his adoption of the new views he has been prating about, is, that they leave him free to indulge in any sin that seems best to his human nature. Preach to me now, William: I am in love with your creed, commandments and all."

Exham was too wise to deem this more than the result of natural revulsion of feeling. So he replied:—

“It is not commandments yet that you should think of, dear friend. Oh, not yet. Their only use is to show you your guilt, since you are not yet pardoned. ‘*If ye love me, keep my commandments,*’ said my Master; and his Apostle added, ‘*They who have believed in God* should be careful to maintain good works.’ Beware! Thank God for your virtuous and unstained life; but, oh, remember that still you are a sinner, and a lost one, while your heart is not given to God.”

“But, Exham, let me talk to you plainly. I have often thought before—and you shall answer me now—may not the invitations to sinners in the Bible be addressed to the *great sinners* only, and may not we—I mean people whom Providence has kept clear of sins of a bad kind, go on a different ground? May we not come and be *disciples* directly?—you understand me? May we not come and be God’s people and friends, and keep His commandments, without that utter prostration of which you speak so often? I know this sounds heresy to

you ; but, in sober earnest, I believe it is true. It is *unnatural* to suppose a virtuous and pure-minded girl of fifteen must come just in the same way as a blood-stained murderer, or a villain old and skilled in iniquity."

" 'All have sinned.' 'There is no difference.' 'There is none that doeth good ; no, not one.' 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' "

"But perhaps you are not right."

"I used Scripture words only."

"Did you ? My dear fellow, I thought they were your own, or words out of some sermon. Show me them."

With joy William took from his pocket his Bible, well marked by loving fingers, well worn by constant use. Eager with hope, he pointed, with accustomed skill, to the great texts which overthrow man's self-confidence. He showed what St. Paul says in the Romans.* He turned back, and showed him that a thousand years before Paul, David had said the same thing,

* Romans i. 18 ; iii. 9, 19, 22.

under God's inspiration.* He went to still earlier times, and pointed to the declaration of the first book of Moses, that, in God's sight, "every imagination of the thought of man's heart was only evil continually."†

"God has said all this, Henry, '*that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before Him.*' But why? Not that He may judge all, but save them. '*For where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*' For even Abraham sought salvation by grace,‡ and David, and all, all of them. Oh, Henry, every man that ever was saved since the world began, was saved as a sinner. I fear, if you do not come in that way, you will never come at all. You are—do not be angry, for I am so, too—you are a sinner; so much a sinner, that you are hopelessly lost, save for God's grace. But He has made, in Christ, a way for *sinners* to be saved. There is no way provided for any but

* Psalms liii. 2, 3; xiv. 1-3.

† Gen. vi. 5; viii. 21.

‡ Rom. iv. 1, &c.

sinners;* and 'great sinners and small,' as people say, must all come in that way—must all be sprinkled with Christ's blood, or left to themselves, to *die* for ever. Oh, I wish I could get you to see it. But it is God's work. Will you let me *pray* with you, in your own room?" asked William, eagerly.

"Well, not to-day," said his friend. "But I give you a promise to reflect on what you have said. Stay, take care; I should not have kept you standing at this cold corner all this time. You have been coughing these five minutes. You must talk no more."

And indeed, what with the cold, and the great earnestness with which he had spoken, Exham was coughing much, and was forced to be silent, when Henry led him to his College room, and made him sit down and rest.

"Stay; let me look at you. You are not well. Oh, Exham! has it come true that you were injuring yourself by the way

* Matthew xviii. 11; Luke xv. 2.

you have acted? I never saw such a change in any one as in yourself these few days past. Are you doing too much? are you reading too late at night?"

"Don't alarm yourself, Hilliard," replied he; "this is only a fit of coughing. I suppose the north-east wind is to blame."

"But I cannot have you standing about in the courts, talking in the wind, with no overcoat on you. You chill yourself, and you will suffer for it."

"Henry, I have a fancy—it may be wrong—but it has often come into my mind lately, that I shall see soon the realities I long for now."

"And let *me* go to—ruin without you," hastily broke in Hilliard. "No, that cannot be. If ever I am to be a wiser or better man, it will be your doing. But, William, you are only talking book-talk. People don't become prophets, and foretell things in real life. You have a cold, and you will lose it again as quickly as you got it, if you take care of yourself, with Miss Exham's help."

"Will you come home with me this evening, Henry?"

"Stay here. You can have at least part of a bed."

"I couldn't. Lizzie would be alarmed if I stayed. She has never been used to even such an innocent irregularity in me. No: I must go."

"Well, then, the sooner the better. I will be inhospitable, and turn you out; but you must put this coat on."

So Henry brought him home, pale and tired. And again the sister pressed the guest to stay, and he did not refuse; and so a second pleasant evening made him free of that little house.

But while William was reading alone, Henry spoke very plain words to his sister on the subject of her brother's health, urging her to keep him at home, if there were any increase of his cold in the morning. They all knelt together that night ere they parted, and Henry Hilliard could not but feel that he was borne upon their hearts in prayer, nor did he resent it now.

Not meeting him in College next day, Hilliard called, and found his friend seated reading. He said he was enjoying a day at home, having sufficient excuse in a slight sore throat. Neither brother nor sister seemed to make much of it. And it was easy to find excuses for pressing Hilliard to stay that evening too.

They had a long, long chat over the fire that March evening. And as the wind, which had risen to a storm without, warred above the chimney, and the hail dashed against the window, the three sitting there felt the peace and quiet within, as we do not feel it more than twice or thrice a year. How each howl of the blast, on such an evening as that, brings warmer comfort to ourselves, when, sitting by the fireside, we listen to its melancholy sweep in the street, as it half extinguishes the long rows of lamps, and whirls an eddy cloud of sleet against the panes of glass! How the hinges creak and the locks rattle! And then, when the seams of door and window are tight, how steadily the candle burns!—how

straight the steam-cloud rises to the ceiling !
All safe within !—all storm without !

“ I think, Miss Exham,” said Henry to Lizzie—in a voice dropped to almost a whisper, with shame for talking of himself —“ I think in one sense I am like the passengers out of doors to-night, and you and your brother like the people within. There is not the least reason why I should not tell you, that when I think of what is coming upon this world, I say within myself, ‘ Would to God I were safe ! ’ ”

They looked at one another, that brother and sister, as if to say, “ Verily, God hears prayer.” And Lizzie answered :—

“ Is not the whole difference just this ? Some are within, some without. No matter how strong the people are *without*, they are in the full blast of the storm : no matter how weak they are, *within* they are at rest.”

William looked at her, as if to say, “ You have struck the right chord : let it ring again till its sound echoes in his heart.”

“ No matter how strong in self, in virtue,

in goodness, the man who is out of Christ may be," she said, boldly, as though something told her she had a mission to Henry's soul to fulfil, "he is but a lost sinner—in danger just because he is out of Christ. And no matter how feeble or frail, how sinful and corrupt, a poor child of Adam may be, once he is taken into the shelter of Christ, and covered with his righteousness, he is free, unblemished, and *saved*."

"You make it plain to me," said Henry, gratefully accepting the illustration. "I was arguing the point with William yesterday only. Perhaps he told you? I never saw so plainly, that the secret of security is not so much *what* we are, as *where* we are. It lies not in our natural good character, but in being found in Christ. You have explained it, Miss Exham. I thank you for the knowledge."

Then he bent a long look into the fire, as though there he expected to read the secret which was beginning to unfold before him. "William," he said at last, "has one much more to learn, when one has

found out that even a virtuous man must be saved in that humbling way?"

"In one sense, '*yes*;' in another, '*no*.' For it depends upon whether you *feel* it or *know* it merely. I mean it depends upon whether the conviction of the need of Christ is a mere argument, or a discovery of personal want, because of sin."

Henry's eyes fell, and he looked disappointed. He said to William, "If you will allow me, I will talk again about this, when we are alone."

Satisfied that the grace that begins with small things was at work in their friend's breast, both were content to rest, and leave the seed of truth to grow, unhastened by human impatience. "Better to feel a little, truly, than much, weakly."

And William felt sure that his friend had come to the fixed conviction, that as a *sinner* he must be saved; he now prayed God to teach his heart to *know* he was a *sinner*. And then they turned to other themes; and Lizzie joined in the conversation once more, till the evening was ended.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CROSSES OF HOME.

LIZZIE EXHAM was one of those who win and charm you with the countenance and expression, while possessing no extraordinary claim to personal beauty. Bright, gentle, loveable, one of old England's true daughters, with a kind word ready for any one who needed it, with a soft rebuke, that could not wound, for all wrong-doing that met her sight; natural and utterly unaffected, she forgot herself, and therefore no one could forget her. Nor could Henry Hilliard, who felt that, in intimacy with her and her brother, he was, as it were, enlarging the circle of his own home. It came quite naturally to him to think of them as his brother and sister.

And he had much opportunity of becoming intimate with that little household; for William's cold became a more serious matter.

He dared not venture out while March winds were blowing. His tutorship had to be given up for the present. His lectures were lost. And in the midst of these crosses, he felt the warm friendliness of Henry Hilliard something to count upon and to prize. That vigorous and sensitive nature, which combined, in an unusual degree, a man's resolution and a woman's feeling, was being more and more drawn out towards his friend. And when the course of lectures was over, and the time arrived for Henry to pay his usual visit of a few weeks to his own home, it was not without something more than common regret that he parted from the Exhams for a while.

There was always a warm welcome for Henry at the Copse, and the circle there met him as usual that brisk March evening when the wheels had stopped at the door, and the coat and cap were flung in homely disorder on the table of the hall.

"You have been very reserved, Henry, in your letters lately," said Mrs. Hilliard,

when the first greetings were over. "Have you any college news to tell us?" And by the way, we are anxious to hear more of the Exhams, that poor family that you helped. You said Mr. Exham had a very good sister; and you said you had been of use to them in getting him pupils; and I think you said you had spent an evening at his house. We scarcely liked that."

"He is in love," cried a small brother of the impertinent age of sixteen, when a boy's wits seem designed at least as much for teasing his brothers and sisters as for minding his lessons.

"You little jackass!" replied Henry, flashing his wrath at him in the only way that seemed to tell upon the boy. But he was unsuccessful in stopping him this time.

"Suppose I am. Jackasses have long ears," suggested the plague.

"Long ears to be more easily pulled," replied the elder brother.

"They don't feel the pull so much as their brothers seem to feel their kicks," retorted the unappeased fellow; and then

the parents separated the amicable duellists. But the conversation put a new thought into Henry's mind. He had never, for one moment, entertained the idea of "being in love" with Miss Exham; and yet there was no doubt that, as he loved William, he loved his sister too. Mr. and Mrs. Hilliard seemed also to have taken the idea from Tom's words. His sisters Nan and Emmie looked at each other, and seemed to think it rather a grand thing to have a brother really in love; for, of course, in their eyes, at ten and eleven years of age, to be accused of such a thing was the same as to be guilty of it.

"Tell us all about the Exhams, though, to come to seriousness," said Mrs. Hilliard; her husband now dozing off, as was his wont, in his arm-chair, by the fire, and her own ears itching for more news.

"Tom, have you your lessons to learn?"

The odious question of his senior was replied to, as he might have expected, by that master of the art of teasing.

"And while I'm at Greek grammar,

you'll be making a clean breast of it to mamma and the girls. But tell me one thing about sister-in-law. Is she pretty? How long are her curls?"

"Imp!" said Henry, very much annoyed, and reddening. "Wait till I examine you in your Greek verbs, that's all:" and the threat told, for Henry had always to report to Mr. Hilliard Tom's progress in his classics, as each vacation brought him home.

And then mother and son were left alone, for Nan and Emma did not stay long after Tom. That usually pleasant time had come, when a son, fresh returned home, has his mother all to himself by the evening fire, and when the doors of the heart are wont to be unlocked at the soft bidding of that most persuasive voice. Where is the son who withholds, at such a time, his confidences from his mother?

And yet, from the few words already expressed, Henry did not feel quite at his ease, nor altogether disposed to confide to his mother all his sentiments about his

new friends. The regulated snore of Mr. Hilliard in his chair, as the newspaper sunk lower and lower in his hands, and his spectacles dropped off into his lap, was suggestive of no interruption to the conversation.

You should know that Mrs. Hilliard, with all her maternal kindliness, was decidedly a proud woman. She was a Hilliard, and that was enough. We mean to say she had that "*proper pride*," as the world calls it, which measures people's worth very much by their wealth, and denies the character of gentlemen to those who spend their days in any employment not directly connected either with the management of an estate, or with "the liberal professions." But with all this she had a soft heart, the original of Henry's own, and would have sent to a hungry man or woman, even at considerable cost, the food he or she might need, "provided always," as the lawyers say, she was not thereby compromised in her "aristocratic sense." All claims of equality must be laid aside

where she gave her help. The recipient of her kindnesses must look up to her as the planet to the sun. Her most "touchy" point was the assertion of an equality unmeasured by land or cash.

Henry, for the first time, felt this, as a bar to his confidence, when he began to speak to his mother of the Exhams. She had heard, as we have said, of his friendship for his fellow-student, and even of his having "stooped to call at their little house." But she was quite unprepared for the disclosure of a friendship based on a sense of absolute equality.

"My dear son, you have forgotten yourself, I greatly fear. Surely, when you did that poor family a kindness, you let the matter rest there. You have not, I trust, compromised yourself by intimacy with them? And that young girl. She may be very good, and all that is nice, you know; but, my dear son, remember what *you* are—what *they* are——"

"Well, mother?"

"Remember, I say, when you go back

to College, what *they* are, and what *you* are, and how you have been brought up ——”

“Do you know what you are speaking of, mother?” said Henry, firing up: for it was his weakness that he could not argue calmly when much interested; and, indeed, these “scenes” were not unfrequent visitations when he was at home. “Surely, you are ignorant that the Exhams are as good as we in point of birth; and I feel honoured, I can tell you, by their friendship. If you knew them as I do, you would say they have done me a favour in giving me their esteem.”

“But they are so poor ——”

“Now, mother, you will make me angry, and that would never do the first night. William Exham is a model of a gentleman, and a true Christian; and his sister is worthy of himself.”

“*A true Christian!*” From Henry’s lips this was new and unexpected praise, and Mrs. Hilliard was startled. “You cannot mean to say you have been getting

into a Methodist set. You know I don't mean," she added, in a pacifying way, just the most irritating, because it revealed so much, "to say *one* word against decided people. We all know how good the Despardes are, and you cannot say that your father or I have ever shown any want of courtesy in that quarter; but they are exceptions. I think the ordinary profession of religion is a very objectionable thing, and you ——"

"For pity's sake, mother, don't drive me out of the room. I could tell you things, perhaps, you would be surprised to hear, if you were only a little more moderate in your denunciation. What the Despardes and the Exhams believe, must be worthy of our consideration."

"The Despardes and the Exhams! You are never coupling these two names! Why, the Despardes are, in point of family and wealth, and all that, among the best people in the county ——"

"And *therefore* you know them," retorted her son, satirically.

But she had a final arrow in her unintentionally bitter quiver.

"The Exhams, as I said, and the Despardes are as different as—as anything can be."

"What can you mean, when you know absolutely nothing at all about it?" said Henry, getting up, and walking up and down the room. "It would be an honour to the house to have any of the name in it. Next to the Eddersley people, I would choose *them*, for all the qualities that I have any mind to like."

This last sentence revealed a meaning to Mrs. Hilliard, that was perfectly appalling. She pushed her husband's knee with her hand, who woke up, crushing the newspaper with a sudden start, and gathering his wits together with his usual difficulty. He saw Henry striding up and down the carpet, with an ugly frown on his brow, and Mrs. Hilliard sitting on the low chair in front of the fire, tapping the fender with her toe, in the manner she always did when vexed, or hurt in her pride. It was as

good a warning as a semaphore signal to him, or the tinkle of the electric bell before the message comes.

“What’s the matter with you both? What has Henry done ——?”

“I’m not quite sure that Harry has been acting quite judiciously, dear,” said she, speaking more calmly than she felt, but in a manner infinitely aggravating to her son, who would rather be opposed than pitied any day. “He has acted kindly to those Exhams, the people, you know, of whom he wrote—the tutor and his poor sister; and then, either from his unsuspecting kindness or their—I don’t know what to call it—uppishness—he has been drawn to commit himself so far, that they have gained quite an influence over him.”

Henry was standing at the far side of the ottoman, staring at his mother, who, in fiery eloquence, went on:—

“He says they are both genteel ——”

“I never said so. I said he was a true gentleman and a true Christian.”

“Well, that is genteel and Christian—

the very combination that, of all others, I detest : for, whatever his generosity has seen in their favour, doubtless an older head than poor Harry's would detect, at bottom, some vulgarity ——”

“ Mother, while I stand in this room, I declare you shall not use such language of a brother and sister whom I am proud—honoured—to call my friends. Do you think *your* son would have picked up acquaintances at College, of whom either he or his parents could ever be ashamed? You reflect on yourself when you suspect such a thing.”

“ Henry, my son, you must not,” said his father—who had not the sharp wits of his wife, and often, in endeavouring to mend matters, made them ten times worse —“ you must not use such language. I think your mother has misconceived your acts. But you must recollect she *is* your mother. She fully believes you had the best intentions; but it is impossible at once to ascertain the antecedents of any family, by seeing a single specimen of

them. I do not mean," he added—seeing Henry again opening his lips to speak—
“I am far from breathing a word against this family, for I know nothing on earth about them: they may be all we could desire, or they may be ——”

“Or they may be *what*, now? ——”

Henry was in high wrath, for he had expected to find his father on his side, and the words just spoken, in apparent moderation, had wounded almost more than those of his mother. “But I beg your pardon, both you and mother. I forgot myself,” he added, as a spark of that patience under opposition, which so distinguished his much-suspected friend, was kindled in his bosom. “Instead of telling you the facts of the case, I have allowed you both to run away with an idea—namely, that this family is poor. I should have told you more.”

“Tell us all,” said his father.

“Will you promise to hear all?”

“We shall not interrupt you.”

“I said that they were as well-born as

any of us, and that they were Christians, and I wish I were one. Their father was a clergyman, and an honour to his profession. But nobility of mind and excellence of heart do not always command wealth in this ill-balanced world, and he went down to the grave, leaving only a moderate life assurance behind him. On the interest of that his wife brought up, with many struggles, and I doubt not many prayers, the best of sons and—I speak honestly—I believe the best of daughters——”

The parents started, and exchanged suspicious looks.

“The best of children. The mother is dead; and by her death-bed her prayers were for her son, that he might become a true Christian. Yes, I see, by your faces, what you think. I *do* honour him for being, as he then became, a true Christian, like his father and mother before him. And I believe a true Christian is one whom Christ has adopted as his own, and who lives to please him. Then they became poor, because of the expenses of Mrs.

Exham's illness and funeral; and it is for that cause that William Exham took to teaching. But it is not for a few weeks only, but for several years, that I have known him; and if he is spared to become what his father was before him, I only hope I may hear him preach every Sunday of my life. Father, he has done me good," said Henry, the tears of hardly checked emotion appearing in his eyes. "He has done your son more good than any one ever did before; and my prayer is, I may not lose his society till he has made me somewhat like himself."

"Now, we have heard you patiently, have we not?" said Mrs. Hilliard. "Tell me now, Harry, whether all that you have said about the——about Mr. Exham being what you call a *Christian*, savours not a little of romance—of an *unreal* state of mind—not fit for the world——"

"Not fit, I verily believe, for *this* world. That is what I said. He was made for a better; and I believe he is not long for *this*."

This was a new fact for the parents, before whose eyes the whole supposed scheme of Henry was developing itself. Both one and the other believed in their hearts that their son had been worked upon by these two, and that the brother would never let the matter rest until he saw his sister married to the young man of wealth, family, and intellectual and personal gifts; — a match which, as they naturally reflected, a better and a greater than designing Lizzie Exham might be proud to make.

CHAPTER XIII.

GUILTY!

“Oh! let us keep our fast within
Till heaven and we are quite alone;
Then let the grief, the shame, the sin,
Before the mercy-seat be thrown.”

THE night had far advanced ere the son was set free by his parents, and he retired to his own room, with many bitter thoughts. He had, it is true, succeeded, by the eloquence which proceeds from profound emotion, in convincing his parents—his father, at least—of the sincere piety of the Exhams; but that was, in their eyes, but a slender evidence of the improbability of any designs on Henry as a match for Lizzie. For these people looked upon professed religion as a sort of proud self-assertion, which was coupled more frequently with hypocrisy than with sincerity. If the truth must be told, they suspected the Exhams of design all the more when they heard Henry's descrip-

tion of them. The ugly fact still remained, that William had repeatedly had their boy to tea, and to stay in the house with them. "Oh, that he had never met them!" was their hearty wish that night, as they retired to rest, but not to sleep.

And what of Henry? In his breast new thoughts had been awakened by this interview. Those skilled in the workings of the human mind will not be surprised to learn that the accusation made against him, as regards his intentions in knowing the Exhams, suggested, for the first time, the very thought they had combated with such anxiety. Did he, he asked himself, as he stood there, did he love Lizzie? And the sincere answer from the depths of his heart was, "Yes." But how? He felt it was respect, admiration, honour: he loved her as he loved her brother, but nothing more. He could plead in his own heart innocent to the charge made against him by his parents that evening. And, moreover, he promised within himself, that in her presence every other warmer feeling should be battled down.

He would be strong. He would not risk the prohibition of further intercourse by giving the least real ground of suspicion.

And then, with a strange feeling, for the hundredth time he opened his desk, and read one—the last—of the “letters of the dead.”

He was startled at the words—words which now came upon his prepared soul, as they never had come before :

“And oh, my dear Harry, if ever you feel that you are a sinner, a poor, weak sinner, who can do no good yourself; if you feel in your heart pride and ambition, discontent or anger, or anything that the Bible does not approve, and which your heart tells you is wrong; instead of trying first to amend your ways in order to please God, go straight to Christ, our dear Saviour: for it was he that put away sin, and we cannot do it. Go to his Cross, and there you will see, as I have done, that there is perfect pardon to be had at once, if we but believe in him. Oh, my dear Harry, you often said you loved me dearly. Do, pray, take

this in good part: go as a sinner to our precious Saviour, just as you are, and he will give you pardon, and make you all you ought to be. Come to him just because he bids you come. These are the last written words for your eyes, of your old friend, sister, and playmate,

“MARY DESPARD.”

The frail, thin paper, soiled and creased as it was, seemed to Henry, in that hour, a very message from heaven. He could not account for the feeling. Surely, he had not read the words aright before? Surely, if he had, he would then have done what he did now—cast himself down upon his knees, and ask of the Lord in heaven to bring him to Christ.

He knelt, he prayed, and the prayer was real. He spoke through Christ's name to his most loving God, and entreated pardon of sin, and grace to believe. But as he prayed, bitter thoughts, first of the unfeeling way he had been treated by his parents, and then remorseful thoughts of his own ungoverned speech before them, rose like a

thunder-cloud across his soul. What! He had thought little of those hasty words as he spoke them. He had set them down to just indignation; but manly pride now appeared to him without excuse, and full of all corruption and sin. They showed him his dark, bad heart—showed him that sin was his master, that he could no more plead innocence before God than the culprit who has just murdered a man can plead “not guilty” before a witness of the act. He saw in that moment that God was an eye-witness of his life; and he beheld his life changed from what he had heretofore thought to be a life of morality and virtue, into one stained by evil motives, unwarrantable desires, insatiable pride, ungenerous selfishness!

Oh, how the light from above revealed the dark places in his heart! It was like a lightning flash, which discovers at once the darkness of the scene and the surrounding objects.

For God’s great light had burst in upon his mind. *He saw he was a sinner.* That

great, that unspeakably great fact in a man's experience of himself—the fact of his being unworthy to be called God's son—was disclosed, but not by any natural process, to this young man's mind. *He was convinced of sin!* Had there been no other man in the world but himself, or had all others been pure and holy, it could not have altered the conviction which came upon him then, with a divine force, irresistible, overwhelming—“*I am a guilty sinner.*”

The little room grew dark, but Henry Hilliard heeded it not. The opened desk, the fluttering letter lying on the hearth, the solitary youth seeking God without a guide—it was a scene of interest, but one that none in that house, could they have stretched their imagination to the uttermost, could have pictured. Faintly did Henry remember some words that he had heard in church, and had read more than once for himself—“*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me: behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts.*”

How fearfully did these two clauses oppose each other ! He, steeped in sin, born in sin, full of sin ; God desiring truth, perfect uprightness, and moral righteousness in the most secret recesses of his soul. How should he reconcile that wide difference ? He felt that the first of these clauses renders for ever impossible to man, the fulfilment of the second ; and if so, what ? Surely, he thought, other Christians cannot have had such sins as mine forgiven ? And his passionate question was, how should he bridge that vast abyss which parts the sinner from his God ? •

And truly that is a vast abyss, though men so little know it ! He is above in heaven, throned in a brightness, and surrounded with a glory, which to our gaze were as insufferable, as to our minds it is inconceivable. To Him, our holy God, all right is chosen, because it is right, with a holy choice ; all sin is hateful, because it is sin, with a holy hatred, and regarded with an infinite abhorrence. Such are our ideas

of God, and such the description which He has given of Himself.

And now, reverse the picture. What are we? Measured not by *each other*, but by Him, what are we? Are we like Him in His holy love of right and truth and virtue? Are we like Him in His holy hatred of wrong and oppression, deceit, falsehood, evil thought, and sin? He is holy: are we holy? If not, we cannot see God. The pure in heart alone shall see Him. Is this description true, or is it not? Are we like God, or as like Him as we might be, were our hearts given up to Him?

These truths all broke in upon Henry's heart that night. Let us leave him with his God. He will teach him more.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SUSPICIOUS LETTER.

“Thy Cross, not mine, O Christ,
Has paid my ransom due;
Ten thousand deaths like mine
Would have been all too few:
To whom save thee,
Who can alone
For sin atone,
Lord, shall I flee?”

THOSE who have entered into the spirit of Mr. Despard, of Eddersley, will be prepared to learn that Henry Hilliard's first interview with that kind man was one surrounded now with new pleasure; for poor Henry found he had returned home different himself, and therefore to find a difference there. Parents who part from their sons for a while, and who find them changed when they return, have a good deal to bear. Would that they bore it always wisely. For there are parents, not only those of this world, but those who have long since

been "inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," who greet the new-born earnestness of their children with words and looks which would chill and kill, if this could be, the germs of that new life within the opening hearts of those to whom they have given natural life. Oh! it is strange that this should be in cases where the parents themselves profess religion. Not so strange, but still inexpressibly affecting, is this conduct, where they do not. For, surely, everything which deeply touches a son's heart should find its echo in that of a mother.

The Hilliards had no thought of doing this. Unhappily, the notion of design was so associated in their minds with the intimacy of their son and the Exhams, that even the assertion of their sincere religion was no palliative of their indignation.

Tom, Nan, and Emma, as children are wont, sat and stared at their parents as they met at the breakfast table, knowing, with childhood's and boyhood's keen intuition, that something had gone wrong in

the house, and suspecting, by a glance at Henry's face, that in that quarter lay the cause. And when Tom saw Mrs. Hilliard deliberately pour the cream into the sugar-bowl, and then fill it up out of the teapot, he absolutely howled with dismay, caused, we may believe, not less by the gloomy prospects of his own breakfast, than by those of his coming vacation. But that *contretemps* provoked the first smile of the day, and the laugh threw a brighter hue over the party.

Mr. Despard called early, and at Henry's suggestion took him for a walk, when the visit was over. Reserving nothing, Henry confided all his troubles to his old friend. He dwelt first on the unworthy views which his parents had adopted of the little family he so valued; and then on the sincere change which his own mind had undergone on the subject of his state before God. And he brought grateful tears into the father's eyes when he spoke of the letters of his beloved girl, and of the part which they had played in his history.

“By all means, my dear Henry, seek, gently, lovingly, to bring your parents’ minds to look kindly on your young friends. Oh, do not let pride get you into trouble with them. Remember who they are, and what you owe them. Unless they directly advise you to act against your *conscience*, you owe them all deference and obedience. So long as your *inclinations* only are opposed, beware lest you mistake *desire* for *duty*, and so resist their wills, when you ought to deny yourself and follow them.”

“But I assure you, that if they separate me from William Exham, they separate me from one who has done me more good than any one I have ever spoken to. He has reached, and newly reached, a shore towards which I am struggling; and they want to forbid me to take counsel of him how to act so as to secure it.”

“Scarcely so much as that. Have they forbid you knowing him? I think not. It is but an intimacy at their own house that they do not approve of. You can surely guess their reason for that; and is it unna-

tural? So long as they only discourage *that*, you cannot have reason to complain."

Henry entreated Mr. Despard to try to make it clear to his father and mother, that his friendship with the family was altogether honourable and undisguised—that their intimacy was that of true friends alone—and that he had concealed nothing from his parents. This Mr. Despard readily promised to do, when next he should call at the Copse.

Henry did not part from his old friend without profit. And he felt he saw something like the light. In his trouble he saw dimly that help would come from the Lord. For Mr. Despard said, "You have been led by Him this first step of the way. He has showed you your sins. Oh, do not now, like so many, insist on trying to walk alone, or to be your own guide. Go as a sinner to that most loving Saviour who died for you. In him is all fulness to supply your want—all righteousness to render you acceptable before God. Only, my dear fellow, refuse steadily to look within to see what

you *can* do : look steadfastly without to see and be satisfied with what Christ *has* done."

It was in a week or two after this, and a few days before the end of the vacation, that at breakfast the post came, and Henry was handed a letter. For many days he had not heard from William. This was in a lady's handwriting ; he had not seen it before, but he had no doubt, from the post-mark, that it was from Lizzie. Poor fellow ! Seeing all eyes turned upon him, and remembering the conversation and the reflections of that first evening, he blushed, and hesitating, put it into his pocket, instead of openly and in a straightforward way disarming all false suspicions, by reading it on the spot.

" That is from Miss Exham," said Tom.

" Is it ?" said his mother.

" After breakfast come to my study," added his father, catching her tone.

Poor Henry ! He burned to read the letter, for he guessed too quickly that it could be nothing but news of William's illness being worse.

The cloud fell on the party again. After breakfast Mr. Hilliard went to his study. Henry, remembering Mr. Despard's counsels, breathed a prayer for humility and patience, and went after his father. Mrs. H., who did not like any chapter to be added to the family history without her help, took leave to go also. So the three met there, and Mr. H. closed the door. It suggested old days when Henry, now a young man almost of age, had gone there as a culprit of ten or twelve years old, to receive some richly merited punishment.

"If that letter is from Miss Exham, I have a right to see it," said Mr. H.; "and I shall expect to be shown it."

All Henry's nature said "no," but something within said "yes," and he spoke thus:

"Father, if I show you this, all I ask is, that you will draw a fair conclusion from it. I have not read it; there it is in its envelope. Surely, you will give me your confidence again when I let you read a letter *first*, which is addressed to myself."

•

Mr. Hilliard took and fingered the letter in surprise. If ever he had counted on anything, it was on a stern resistance to this piece of paternal interference. The gentle conduct of his son disarmed and disconcerted him.

"Open it," said his mother, with womanly curiosity, absolutely burning to read the tender lines of the letter.

"There it is, my boy. Positively," said he—clearing his throat in search of a word—"positively I don't think I have any right to read it first."

"You have; or, stay, let *me* read it," said the other parent, red-hot to see the words of affection, and thus convict, once for all, the guilty culprit.

"I prefer you reading it, father," said Henry, handing back the letter, and wondering how long this scene was destined to last. Mr. Hilliard read:—

"DEAR MR. HILLIARD—I have sad news to tell. My brother is very much weaker than when he wrote last, and desires me to write and tell you so. God help us in our

sorrow. William thought you would perhaps like to come back sooner and see him. His cold has, I fear, settled on the lungs, and the doctor says—what I cannot write. Pray for us both.

“I remain your sincere friend,

“E. M. EXHAM.”

Having read the letter aloud, the two parents both stood silent. Henry caught the paper, and exclaimed :

“I must go and see him. Father, *can* you let me go a day or two sooner, though the vacation has been so short? If William Exham were to die before I returned to College, I think I should sorrow all my life. *Can* you refuse to let me go?”

Mrs. Hilliard said, “Well, really.”

Mr. Hilliard broke in: “The boy has acted well. He is right. Go! see your friend. You see, my dear, it is all right:” and he bent a look, meant to be very significant, at his wife.

Poor Henry had no thought save of his dying friend. He only said :

“Oh, think kindly of them both. They

are in fearful sorrow. Poor Miss Exham has no friends. What can she do if he is taken away?"

Henry's conduct had met its reward. An incubus was taken 'off, or nearly removed from, his parents' minds. That "*Dear Mr. Hilliard,*" told no tales. There was nothing to hide. The parents felt that. The letter was simplicity itself. And Henry went next morning to town, and found himself, before the lapse of many hours, again in William Exham's house.

Lizzie met him in the hall. So pale, so earnest, so glad to see him back. He seemed to be now more at home here than at the Copse. Here they were all as one: there, into his best feelings not one of them could enter. It had been only by silence on the topics nearest to his heart that he had passed quietly through these few last weeks. But this was all a momentary reflection.

"How is he?"

"Longing to see you, but exhausted with

coughing, and very weak. I must tell him that you are here. And oh, Mr. Hilliard, what a weight is gone since you have come back!" said she, in unreserved confidence. "I cannot tell how it is, but all seems brighter now. I was very nervous, very much dismayed; for, as you know, there is no near relation for me to write to."

They met, William and Henry, in a few minutes. Oh, what a change in that brief period! We need not paint it. Let those describe it to themselves, who have known what coming death can do to the human frame. But for his spirit? Let those imagine its added brightness, who have known what coming glory can do for the waiting Christian.

"Oh, William, my own friend and brother, I have been praying for you the whole journey: how are you *now*?"

"They do not think there is much hope, Henry," he said, in a voice which was depressed to check a wave of emotion, which, had he spoken in a higher tone, would have shaken his utterance too much.

Something told Henry that what he said was true. "What doctor have you had?" he asked, anxiously.

Lizzie named the doctor, and the name was sufficient guarantee of his skill and kind attention; for Dr. S. bore the name of unusual kindliness, united with rare talent. In that quarter there was nothing for Henry to do for his friend. What did he know of sick beds, of death, of the sad duties of the survivor? A new instinct placed him in a moment in the position of brother and helper; and both those poor lonely ones felt how fully they could count upon his affectionate care.

They were left alone after a while, the sick young man and Henry. And William's first inquiry was, "Henry, in a few days, perhaps, I may not be able to speak much. Tell me, has our Master found the lost sheep yet?"

"He has taught the prodigal son bitterly to say, 'I have sinned against heaven: I am not worthy to be called thy son.'"

"Oh, Henry, don't stop there. Arise,

and go to thy Father. Don't stop; don't stand where you are."

"But, William, hear me. I do not desire to stop there. God forbid I should! For at times I feel I am in fearful danger. A place of torment seems to open its mouth to devour me. At another moment I seem to hear it whispered, 'Fear not, all will be well.' When I look to God's promises, they seem kind and good; but when I look within, they no longer seem to be *for me*. Were I a little more in *earnest*, more *anxious* to be brought to Him, I could think better of my state; but while I *know* I am all sinful, it seems to affect me little. I cannot *feel*."

"And who told you you were to *feel* all this?" asked William.

"Surely I should do so; I should feel, above all, God's love. But as for me, I am vile. I am a great way off. Instead of being nearer God, I never felt so far."

William raised himself on his elbow from the pillow, and looked towards Henry, who sat in the little room between him and the

window. The light from the declining west shone upon his face, but, oh, there was there a brighter light; and in the blue deep eyes a clearer brilliancy than Henry had ever seen in human eyes before.

“ ‘*When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*’ Oh, Henry, is not that for you? You suggested the very words yourself by saying you are a great way off.”

“ Does He love me, then? Is this really for me? Oh, William, lie down again, you look so faint! Does the God against whom I have sinned, *love me?* ”

“ Can you possibly doubt it? And yet nearly every one doubts it, when first he finds out that he is a condemned sinner. He thinks, because he is guilty, God hates him. But who should doubt His love, His deep, unchanging love to *sinners*, who believes that He has not spared His own Son, but sent Him to die for us? ”

“ *You feel this, dear William; I do not. And I can see no promise to one who does*

not feel—at least feel *some* love in return for God's."

"Oh, how strangely does every one *invert* God's truth, Henry! People put repentance before believing, and love before trust, and a changed heart before a forgiven one, all to their own miserable loss. To *whom* were God's promises made?" he asked, with animation.

"To sinners, I suppose," answered Henry, in a hesitating voice.

"To sinners truly; and surely not to such sinners only as love Him. *That* would take away all the freeness of the promise. Sinners do not love God. But to the *ungodly*, to His enemies, to the cold-hearted, He makes His promises;—to all—to *you*. Oh, believe this. I can't speak much; but, oh, do believe it. If I had not another hour to live, Henry, this is what I should tell you: just as you are, without previous change, without preparation, you may receive the full salvation of Christ. I can't say more," said he, as he almost gasped for breath, and lay back;

"but read for yourself—the passage I have marked in my Bible—the seventh of Luke."

Henry opened the Bible, longing for light, and read the passage marked.

"Jesus said, There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

"And when they *had nothing to pay*, he frankly forgave them both."

And reading on, he saw that the poor sinful woman, who had brought nothing to Jesus but her sin, and her honest desire to be rid of it, was forgiven at once. "*Her sins, which are many, are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.*" The only recommendation to Christ possessed by this woman was her sin, her debt of "five hundred pence;" and though she came *as a sinner* to Jesus, she was then and there received, and sent thence a saved soul. "*Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.*"

And when Henry had read this, he sat long in silent thought. What was the

meaning of this passage of Scripture? Unquestionably it overturned his cherished views of previous preparation to receive mercy. "After all," thought he to himself, "a person must be either guilty or not guilty, and a guilty man can be acquitted *only* by the act of his judge, not by his own change. My dear William," he suddenly said aloud, "there seems to me to be something new here. Did you ever tell it to me before? 'Just as *I* am.' Can *I* put it in that way? Can *I*, just as *I* am, with so many sins, doubts, and changing moods—can *I* come to Christ, sure of being received?"

"You *can*."

"But *how*? If he were *here*, it would be different. I could go and say, 'Lord, here I am: oh, save me!'"

"And, Henry, can't you say that just as well now, as if he *were* here? Can you not go to him just as sure of being received?"

"But suppose he should not be willing to receive *me*. I have heard some say

that all are indeed invited, but all are not elect——”

“ Give up the thought. Oh, Henry, have nothing to say to these doubts. Are you a *sinner* ? ”

“ Yes, truly.”

“ Do you believe that Jesus died for sinners ? ”

William received not the answer he looked for. Henry said nothing, but seemed lost in thought. All his conflicts passed through his mind again, and the wondering thought of his soul began to be, “ Are not these delays *my own fault* ? Shall I ever become more fit by waiting ? Am I not *adding to sin* by delay ? ” And yet the perplexing question still remained, “ God can only hold the just in favour, and I am unjust : ” and he longed and prayed to know the answer. Then, in his secret soul, he seemed to hear some whispered words—what were they ? They fashioned themselves, by degrees, into a shape he could comprehend, but which he had never noted much before : “ *The just for the unjust.* ” And then

the rest of the wondrous truth rose up before him in the simple Bible words, which, till then, he, like thousands beside, had scarcely cared for. "CHRIST ALSO HATH ONCE SUFFERED *for sins*, THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST, THAT HE MIGHT BRING US TO GOD." What! Were these words true for him, Henry Hilliard? Why not? He was unjust. He wanted, above all things, to come to God. Here he beheld Jesus, once for all, dying for the *unjust*, and for the very purpose of making them just, and bringing them to God. Oh, marvellous suitability of Christ to his personal wants! And then *how* was he to come? What was he to do? He thought a minute, and the voice seemed again to say, "'Christ hath once suffered for us.' It is a past work, a finished work, a work for thee. There remains nothing to be done." And as the curtain of night rises and displays the glory of the morning, so rose the night clouds from Henry's soul—rose, and he saw himself no longer to be one darkly seeking Christ, but one whom

Christ had sought, *and found*. The light of the Sun of Righteousness poured all His beams on that anxious soul. He knew it by a ready and new intuition. And as William looked, he saw that *that* Light of lights was indeed rising on his friend's face. There was a long pause, and then Henry said :

“ Exactly as I am, Jesus died for me ; exactly as I am. Surely he can take me for his own. Oh, William, I cannot tell you how I feel his special grace, in taking such a one as I am for his own. I feel ashamed to be so treated. It is wonderful, wonderful. And now I know your Lord has become mine, and has had pity on me, as a poor lost one. I feel as if I would rather not say more about it now. But give thanks for me ; do give our gracious God thanks for me. For many days I have seen that I am a sinner. Not till this moment did I know that I could be received by God *as a sinner*. I thought—God forgive me—that I ought—though I scarce knew how—to become more fit, and not to dare approach as I was.”

Brighter than the light of morning shone the joy of thankfulness on William's face. These two saw salvation as a present thing—as a great and overpowering reality, and not as a fiction—a fact, not an opinion; and as they measured the greatness of it by the thought of what salvation is *from*, and what it is *for*, they were hushed in awe and reverent restraint; and what they spoke, they spoke in prayer and praise. No eye saw their faces—no ear, save that of the Highest, heard their words.

Weakened at first by the excitement of that hour's interview, after a while William seemed to be the better of it. And during the evening they had much conversation about many things. Henry was informed of much that he did not know before in connection with the family affairs of his friend.

"Did you hear about Edgar Mordaunt?" asked William, with energy. His downward course has been rapid. It is not more than six weeks since you met him, I suppose."

A sudden fit of coughing put an end to

the conversation, and it was not till weeks later that Henry heard the truth. Casting away faith, he had cast away conscience, and flung himself into a mad vortex of dissipation—had been even already drawn in by that remorseless whirlpool, and had sunk there. Let not this pen describe the particulars of that giddy, blind career, from free-thinking down to the shipwreck of the moral nature, and thence to a nameless, shameful tomb!

Oh! if men only knew what floodgates they open when they cast away their credit in God's revealed truth, they would pause and hesitate ere they took the fatal step. Few, indeed, are the natures which do not suffer in *moral* integrity, when once they let go their hold of Christianity. Were there no argument for the Scriptures, save that derived from the *restraining* effect of belief in their divine authority, that alone, in the eyes of those who are acquainted with the world and its dangers, were sufficient to make it stand for ever as the rule of human life.

CHAPTER XV.

WILLIAM'S LEGACY.

"Not long, not long! The spirit-wasting fever
Of this strange life shall quit each throbbing vein,
And this wild pulse flow placidly for ever,
And endless peace relieve the burning brain."

HENRY HILLIARD had seen his utter guilt and demerit before God, in such colours as convinced him for ever that help must come from *without*, not within. And then, by the grace of God, he had received the knowledge of this truth, that to such a helpless, worthless sinner, Christ brings salvation *near*, as a *finished* work. *A Finished Work*. It was in striving to understand *this*, that Henry, like so many others, made such mistakes, and was kept waiting so long. When Jesus died, he died with the words on his lips, "*It is finished.*" He who either looks to reformation, or repentance, or worthiness, or earnestness, or *anything but sinfulness*, as a qualification for re-

ceiving that work for himself, denies, in fact, that *it is finished*. A debt is not paid, if more remains to be paid. A picture is not finished, if one stroke remains to be added. A day is not finished, if one minute is still to run. And so, *nothing* is to be added to the work of Jesus Christ. All may receive it at once, and as they are; for to delay is virtually to try to add something more to what God has completed.

When Henry saw this, and found, for the first time, that then and there salvation was offered to him, he believed, and was happy. Emptied of self, he had found life in the Righteous One; and now he was saved—he had everlasting life. For “He that hath the Son hath life;” and, “Being justified by faith, we *have* peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,” “by whom we have now received the atonement.” (John iii. 26; Rom. v. 1, 11.)

Bright and happy was the glow of his first love to Jesus. As the sun in the heavens is most beautiful at its rising and

at its setting, when the day is beginning, and when, amid lengthening shadows, it is wearing to its close; so it is with the Christian. Commend us to no sights more beautiful than the believer in his first moments of joy and love; and to him who, having trodden with the Lord the long path of life, finding at every step that "He is faithful who hath promised," nears the tomb, his silvery hairs a crown of glory. The one is the beauty of promise, the other of experience. In the one, hope, in the other, thanksgiving, predominates; but both are one in love. The love of the believer in his first days of salvation—tender, impulsive, glowing;—the love of the aged Christian—deep, subdued, ripe, and venerable. The one is the rivulet as it shines brightly at the fountain; the other the river, just as it nears the ocean!

Those who have passed through such scenes as we have related in the former chapter, will be prepared to learn that the conversation in that little chamber, by

William Exham's bedside, was full of the choicest pleasures to those three. For, day after day, when Henry's work was over, he walked to George's Street, to spend the long evenings with his friend. And it was plainly as great a pleasure to William as to himself when they thus met. Think it not strange, that in their conversation Christ was all—that they placed

“Him first, him last, him midst and without end.”

It was with opening wonder and joy that the plan of salvation unfolded itself before his mind, in its origin, its nature, its fullness. He had laid hold on Christ as one blind or falling grasps a guide or support, and is safe. Now he was to learn how suitable is this kind Helper to all man's wants, and most of all to the wants of the sinner, as such. So common, so almost universal, is the mistake that salvation is for the *good* only, that it was to him as to many another, a matter of great surprise to learn that it is for the *bad*. (Rom. ii. 20-26; iv. 5; xi. 6.) In fact, forgiveness of sins

can manifestly be received only by sinners, and if they could bring their own recommendation, they would not need God's grace. The righteousness of God can be needed only by those who have none of their own. All this Henry began to see more and more; and the more he saw it, the more he marvelled, and said, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath *bestowed* upon us, that *we* should be called the sons of God," (1 John iii. 1.)

It was a great pleasure to Henry to find, when he reached William's house, a few evenings after his arrival, that Dr. S., their kind friend, had brought his wife, a woman of large heart and abundant experience by sick beds, to sit with William, and cheer up his sister. And Lizzie began to find, for the first time since her mother died, what it was to have a kind womanly heart to trust to, and to tell her sorrows, and thus halve them by sharing them with another. And Mrs. S., on her part, was drawn to the patient, loving girl, whom they aided with all that kindly affection which we naturally

feel towards those whom we have been able to help.

And often, after this, when Lizzie was weary with attending William, Henry found it a pleasant task to take her place, and Lizzie would be refreshed by a visit or a drive with these friends who had been raised up for her in her lonely trouble.

Henry and she met daily. And Lizzie was one of those whose frank, free manner, and genuine character, utterly put away the sort of shyness he commonly felt with ladies. He had not had much knowledge of the world, nor had he half the experience of female society that most young men of his age possess. Lizzie, too, had come to look upon him almost as she looked on William, her own brother.

“My dear son,” wrote Mrs. Hilliard to Henry, in about a week after the commencement of the term of lectures, “my dear son, I *hope* you are very busy at your books. You know we have your word that you will just be *friendly* with Mr. and Miss Exham, and let it stop *there*. I hope your friend is

better, and that he will soon be able to go about again. Tom is *working hard* at his classics, and says you gave him much help, and that he will be entering College before you are long out of it."

Henry was half amused and half angry at the letter, and as he put it into his pocket, he said, "If ever I fall in love with Lizzie Exham, I do believe it will be mother's doing:" and as he thought thus, he curiously inquired of himself again, whether he would be glad or not did circumstances ever make them more to each other than they were now.

But we have still other scenes to sketch, and they can be *but* sketched. Who would be pleased by too accurate a portraiture of the bed of death?

"Henry," said William, one day when he had him all alone, and he was pained as he spoke, more than ever, "oh, Henry, how much you have been to me! A brother, a friend, a kind nurse, the tenderest of comforters. I have no dread of dying, and that you know; nor will *you*, when

you come to die, for our Jesus has broken the bars of the tomb. Nor have I any fear for Lizzie. I know her Heavenly Father will watch over her, and raise up friends for her when I am gone."

Henry was moving in his chair in that restless way which proved how the words affected him: and as he sat there, and thought of the soon-approaching time when Lizzie would actually be left alone, was it unnatural that all at once the longing seized him to be, one day, to the lonely girl, even *more* than a brother?

"Yes," he said to himself, "why should it not be so yet? Who is like her? Whom shall I ever love as I love her?" In a few moments a hundred different questions darted through his mind, and first amongst them all, he thought of the often repeated words of his mother, who had foretold the very thing which now seemed to him the brightest prospect of his heart.

At that moment Lizzie returned from a short drive; and let the reader who has felt as Henry did, pardon him, if, at the

moment she entered, bright and fresh from the open air, he thought her beautiful, and longed to hide nothing from her.

They met the next day, when it was growing late. The April evening was settling on the world, and the level sun looked in through the window. It would require more skill than ours to pourtray the scene upon which that red sun-ray shone. A strange group was this! No mourning parent there. No circle of friends about the lonely one. No minister to pray with him; no children to shed tears of unintelligent but desperate sorrow. But instead, the friend and brother who had so long loved the dying one, and who now comforted him with a hidden promise, on the strength of which his only earthly trouble was set at rest. Yes, it was an unusual scene. But the presence of Christ was there. And though, a little while before, anxiety had almost rent poor William's heart, having cast that care upon the Friend of friends, He had made a way to set it at rest now.

All was calm. The dear sister who had given not one thought to herself or her future destiny all this time—confident with a woman's simplicity, a Christian's faith, that all would be well—she sat close by his head, and bathed his brow or held his burning hand. He felt too truly that soon increasing weakness and exhaustion would no longer suffer him to speak much. His dying witness to Christ must be made now. And when he spoke, it was in a low whisper, and with much effort.

“Read to me, my own darling, the verses in Revelation that I love.”

And in her soft, clear voice, she repeated—for she knew them well—the words of the blessed vision which have comforted thousands of mourners, and which may yet comfort thousands more:—

“And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.”

“Shall serve him,” said William, slowly repeating the words, as he raised his hand,

and laid it upon hers. "I feel—as if I have never—done anything for him—here. But—his servants—shall—serve him yet."

"You shall not say you have done *nothing*, my own dear friend, while I sit here," said Henry. "How much I owe to you, from the day when you first told me of your own salvation, until the day I found Jesus through your words! Oh, no. And did I not watch you, as day by day you spoke to willing and unwilling in College? Fool that I was, not to follow your example. How Mordaunt and I despised you then! And now you can do no more. Oh, that I may yet do something in the same cause, and in the same place!"

"Walk—with Jesus," said William. He strove to add more, but, failing, he looked into his friend's face with a glance which showed that he felt that in those three words of counsel lay all that needed to be said. Then he looked to Lizzie to read on.

Her voice she could scarcely steady now, but the words were simple, and each fell on his ears like softest balm:—

“And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

“Serve him”—“See his face”—“Reign for ever,” he added, in a voice sunk in awe to a scarce audible whisper, as though he spoke in the very presence of the God he loved. “I am—going there.”

After this he sunk rapidly; but he felt at rest, having said to them all, or nearly all, he desired.

“Oh, Lizzie—sister, sister—raise me up, I cannot breathe,” said he the evening after the conversation just related. There were some painful struggles for breath, and Henry turned away. But he became calm after a few moments, and lay back.

“Henry, I love you. Oh, Lizzie—oh, precious, precious sister—I love you. I am going away—to Jesus——”

And as he spoke the words, the voice was interrupted by the hand of nearing

death. Henry had sent the little maid for the doctor, knowing too well, at the same time, that he could do nothing now. William lay back very quiet, and no struggle seemed to pass through the poor, thin, feeble frame. But he appeared no longer to see the friends he loved, unless those calm blue eyes, so steadily lifted upward, were already gazing in the face of the Friend of friends. He said no more, unless those moving lips were speaking in prayer to the Friend to whom he was going for those he left behind him. And as darkness came down with silent wing upon the world, William Exham's spirit passed to the heaven where there is no night.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONFLICTS.

“It is not that this earth
Has grown less bright and fair; that these grey hills,
These ever-lapsing, ever-lulling rills,
And these breeze-haunted woods, that ocean clear,
Have now become less beautiful, less dear;
But I am homesick!”

Who can say how that kind doctor's heart was riven, as, entering too late at Henry's summons, he found that the last sad scene was over. Who shall tell how deeply his gentle wife felt it, when, returning to her, he said briefly—

“Poor young Exham! He is gone. The end came a little sooner than I thought.”

“Dear young fellow. And who will look to the funeral? What about Lizzie?”

“I have no doubt young Hilliard will be trying to arrange matters;—the best young fellow in the world, but no experience. He may help to soothe her, but I had better do

the rest. The funeral neither he nor she could look to."

Mrs. S. looked gratefully at her husband. "I think," said she, in her quiet, persuasive voice, "Lizzie Exham ought to come and stay with us for the present."

"Why not?" replied he.

"It will be a rare opportunity of doing good," she said, her thankful eyes all speaking of love and sympathy. And so in half an hour they had arranged all, and Dr. S. was desired to fetch her home to —— Square with him. Then he went forth again to settle for the last sad office. With the active hand of sympathy he arranged all. He did all. And when, awaking from a sort of stupor of sorrow and reaction, the poor desolate sister found herself an inmate of his own house, who shall say that both his wife and he did not find, in her uplifted eyes of gratitude, a full reward?

And thus all was over! Never did the Father of the fatherless stir up in human heart a tenderer pity and love than He kindled in those of Dr. S. and his kind wife

towards this poor drooping, lonely orphan. In the first days of sorrow she seemed scarce to know where she was. All the tense feelings which for weeks had been kept at full stretch, had given way now, and the earliest days of her visit she spent in her own room, watched and nursed by her new mother as though she had been her own child. There we must leave her for awhile. The close of Henry's lectures was at hand, and he had not yet seen Lizzie, though he had called several times. He returned home without having met her again.

It grated at first somewhat harshly upon Henry's ears, that sound of joyful and laughing welcome which met him, as once again he stood in the hall of his own home.

When all the children were gone to bed, the same party remained by the fire which had sat there not many weeks before, so agitated then with excitement, anger, and jealousy.

Mrs. Hilliard thought that all this was happily over now; and she even ventured,

in the gentlest terms, to hint as much to her son.

“ So, my dear boy, your poor dear friend is gone ; and, you know, though I am sure you must grieve deeply, *we* cannot help feeling—feeling—it is *so* pleasant to have our own Harry here again.”

Harry had power now to be patient. Thank God for it.

“ You are of age now ; and if you do not positively desire the contrary, both your father and I think, that having failed, from no fault of your own, in your degree examination, it would be perhaps as well to give up College now, and begin your country life. We shall of course celebrate your coming of age with all due festivities, and if you do not see beauty and fashion”——

“ Mother !”

“ What ?” She started at his tone ; for he turned round to her his face, which had been perfectly calm, but which now was lighted up with an expression of sorrow, resolution, and perhaps a little shame ; and when she saw his look, she exclaimed again——

“What? Nothing more surely is going to happen to break in upon our quiet enjoyment and——”

“Mother! I may as well speak the whole truth at once.”

“*What?*” burst in his father, “you are not—oh, Harry, you are never thinking of that girl——”

“Mother,” he said, with a strong effort to control himself, and appear not to mark his father’s observation, “I am not what I was. *I am a Christian!*”

He knew well the way his news would be received. He expected anger and ridicule and reproach. He was prepared for it, and he bore it.

“Do you mean to reproach your parents when you say that? Do you mean to set yourself up above them—to say, ‘Stand by; I am holier than thou’? If what you say is true—and I am not quite clear what you mean by it—surely you will show your Christianity best by not for ever parading it in your father’s face and mine, but by letting it keep you in humility and obedience.”

"My dear father and mother, I am happier now than when I went away—wiser, I hope, too; and you will find me more obedient, and, I trust, more humble."

This disarmed them—such answers generally do—and all was well for a few minutes.

"Now, my son, I am glad to hear *that*. That's what I call the true 'fruit of the Spirit.' Now, let us talk about what I was going to say. We have issued cards for a large party for Tuesday next. The Despardes we have not, of course, asked; they do not go out where there is dancing."

"I don't like it either," Henry burst in again. "Oh, will you ever understand me? Parties, balls, dancing, are distasteful to me now. God has given me something a thousand times better, and now I live for glory, and I desire to acknowledge and glorify Him, and if He spares me, I would work for Him, speak of Him, suffer for Him!"

"So you think a little innocent pleasure, a few young people meeting for a dance, *wrong*? I see no true Christian love and

cheerfulness in such strait-laced opinions," said his mother, sneeringly.

"I do not say whether these things are right or wrong, mother. I am not to dictate; but all I say is, from my heart I declare that I have no taste for them, and that I shrink from everything of the kind; they are burdensome to me now"——

"Oh, this is too bad," said Mr. Hilliard. "These modern notions are carrying the young into all sorts of absurdities. Positively, had I foreseen what would have come of your knowing those people, I never could have allowed it. Every Hilliard celebrates his majority by a ball."

What was this young child of God to do? That festivity he would not join in unless he must. Those parents he longed to win, and not to annoy and prejudice. How should he both win them, and yet be faithful to his God? This is the hard question of many a youthful Christian. He knew where to go for direction *now*. So he lifted up his heart in prayer for grace, and bore his witness thus:—

“Let me speak calmly. Mother, a great change has come over me during the last few months. It is just as plain to me as if I had been brought from a dark room into one full of light. I love things I used to dislike. I am indifferent to things that I then loved. I am happier now than I was. My conscience is at peace. I feel I am forgiven. Had I died four months ago, I believe I should have been *lost*. Did I die now, I as firmly believe I should go to my Saviour: for, oh,” he continued, warmly—remembering that “confessing with the lip” must go hand in hand with “believing in the heart”—“my Saviour has taken pity upon me, a poor sinner, and has put my sins away by dying in my stead. He has given me grace to believe in him, and he has given me his Holy Spirit to make me know this, and to make me love God. And now, by God’s help, I do trust I may be all a son ought to be to you and my father. I will try to love, please, and submit myself to you in all things; but do not, if you love me, try to mix me up in the world.

Balls and routs, and scenes of dissipation, where God is forgotten or dishonoured, are not now to my taste. *Please, mother,*" he said, with beseeching eyes fixed on her face, "please bear with me, and do not get up, for my sake, a round of amusements for which I have no heart!"

They looked at each other, those parents, for a few moments, as though each felt that the natural eloquence of their son could proceed from nothing less than a deep conviction that he was right; and yet as if each desired that the other should speak first. At length the mother, ever more ready than her husband with words, said— and how many parents, in ignorance, have said the same:—

"Do you not see, Henry, that what you say is just the same as denying that we are Christians—just the same as saying that we are *now* what you were, according to your views, some months ago. Just as much as making yourself out a saint, and all the world sinners. Is *that* reverent? is that humble?"

"Oh, mother! I owe my life to you, and I love you more than I can say. Do not take it unkindly—do not think ill of me for saying it; but if I could but see you as happy as I am, as joyful in Christ as I am, I could almost lie down and die in peace. I *know* Jesus loves you; I *know* he would show you all he has shown me, if you sought him. Pardon me if this seems not the way to speak to you; but I feel God would not have me silent when His truth is concerned."

"Henry," said his father, unnerved, "it is not right to speak in this way. Time will show you, you are rather excited. You will cool down. These views are fit only for children and pietist women, not for *men*. You will yet be as glad of a ball or a party as any of your forefathers; and do not commit yourself now to anything foolish, nor bring needless reproach on the name of Hilliard."

Henry—poor Henry—looked full in his father's face as he spoke, and bitter were his feelings. To foretell a going back—

coldly to call this "excitement"—and to predict a choice of the sinful world once more, instead of Christ—oh, let those enter into his feelings who have felt the like. It was too much for even his manly heart. He burst into tears, and hiding his face in his hands, said only—

"Father, I had much rather, if one or the other must be, bring reproach on the name of Hilliard, than on the name of Christ."

"Come, come, it is bed-time now," said Mr. Hilliard, after a while. "You will be better to-morrow. Let us all go to our beds. Good night, Henry."

CHAPTER XVII.

LIGHT FROM BEHIND THE CLOUDS.

HENRY HILLIARD was not the first who proved by experience that the hardest sphere of labour in the Master's cause is the sphere of home. But neither was he the first to find out that it is a hopeful sphere, if *consistency, joy, and faithful counsel*, go hand in hand.

Long and earnestly did he pray that night, as he bent over his Bible in his own room, that he might be given the souls of his parents as his crown of rejoicing. Oh, the joy of pouring forth his whole soul into that open ear, which is *never* turned away from the prayer of the anxious or troubled heart!

Great was Henry's surprise next morning to find that his parents had come to the conclusion to "humour him" in this matter of the ball. In fact, the invitations had

only been written, not sent ; and his touching entreaty had been availing. Did he not see in this the first-fruit of his prayers ?

“ You must have your way, after all. The ball would be yours, and you seem so set against it, that indeed it would be scarcely fair to go on with it against your will.”

If eyes and lips could convey grateful thanks, you may be sure those of Henry Hilliard did so—he felt such a weight lifted off him.

But we have another scene to picture, and then our story must draw to its close. This vacation, too, was nearly ended ; and it must be confessed that Henry looked forward with an undefined but earnest joy to his return to College. It is quite superfluous to assure the reader, that his thoughts were very often wandering to the house of Dr. S., and that he burned to know how Lizzie was, and to hear from herself all she did and all she felt in that new home. Did she know—did she suspect even—could she return his love ? These were all

questions undecided as yet ; and he longed and burned, with a strange thrill of desire, to hear their answer from her own lips : he had never felt it possible to speak of her to his mother, knowing how badly his words would be received ; but he prayed for better days, and inwardly excused himself for his silence on the reasonable plea, that even Lizzie knew nothing of his feelings, and should they not first be made known to her ?

It was but one evening before the close of the vacation, that as Henry was sitting in his own room, writing and reading, as was his custom before he retired to rest, his mother came in, and shut the door deliberately, and took a seat beside him. He expected a scene like those previously described ; but he was agreeably surprised by her altered and softened manner.

“ Henry, my child, you are going to leave us again. I am very sorry. Indeed I am sorry,” she continued, “and your father and all are. I must confess, that whatever has made the change, you have been more what a son should be than ever. Dear

Harry, we have been struck by your character and conduct. We have begun to honour you for being so quiet and gentle and humble; and indeed if it is any comfort to you to know it, I never thought so well of what is called a 'Christian' as I do now; for I see that your quick temper has been subdued, and your fits of pride are gone."

"Oh, mother, do you say so?" said Henry? And forgive him, if, on that mother's breast, the son's face was hidden, as she uttered words so welcome to him to hear.

She stroked his hair, and spoke in a softened voice to him, as he still hid his head there, where it had rested for the first time one and twenty years ago. And she went on—

"Do not think that you were not watched. Many eyes were upon you. I know the Despardes were watching you. Your father was, your mother was. And a mother's eyes are very quick. If you had been setting yourself up, or rebuking us, as

some people do who think themselves better than their neighbours," said she, with something of the old pride breaking forth, "we should have turned more against your religion than even you thought. But, dear boy, you made it beautiful; and you have done good by your consistency."

Oh, were not these words of gold in Henry's ears? The bread cast upon the waters—was he finding it now?

"My mother, if I never had another happiness but this, I think I should be happy indeed. Darling mother," he went on, lifting up his head, and looking her full in the face, "will *you* come to *my* Saviour?"

"How can I?"

He felt that the words came from her heart.

"Mother, it is all easy. '*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*' You may be a Christian too, and this is the way. Only believe now in him. He will take away all sin. He will give you peace!"

"I will think about it, my boy."

"Do not be angry with me if I say it is wrong to stay thinking. Jesus says '*now*.' 'Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.'"

"No, Henry. You are young. You could come thus, perhaps; but I—I have lived so many years—have sinned so much—have gone so far——"

"Not too far for the good Shepherd. No. I am certain there need be no waiting. All is ready. Come now. Oh, mother, come now."

As thus he pleaded with his mother, she softened more and more, and something seemed to say to him—persevere.

Henry had no further conversation with his mother ere he left home.

But you should have seen the testimony his little sisters bore to his good-nature and kindness, as they clung to his neck in bidding good-bye.

"Oh, Harry, *when* will you be back again? We shan't have any more nice stories now till you come home," said Nan.

“ And Harry dear,” added Em., “ whatever *shall* I do with my baby-house when it gets wrong? Who ’ll glue on the legs of the tables? Who ’ll stick in the doll’s eyes when they tumble out?”

Tom’s parting, too, was characteristic. “ You are a perfect ‘brick,’ Hal; and I only hope you ’ll make me as sound a fellow as you are when I ’m as big.”

And Mr. Hilliard, with concealed emotion, said, “ The sooner your business is over, my son, the better I shall be pleased, when you come home for good.” And so he went.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"ALL RIGHT AT LAST!"

"Now hand in hand, firm link'd at last,
And heart to heart, enfolded all;
They smile upon the troubled past,
And wonder why they wept at all."

It is a Christmas evening, the Christmas after the events last narrated. The snow lies deep on the lawn, and the full moon throws long shadows from the spreading oaks across the spotless white. Still, cold, and perfectly calm, the night reigns on. But in the drawing-room of the Copse there is—well, not so much a *merry* as a very *happy* party. There are no strangers there. It is—what we believe Christmas gatherings should be—a family party. Who are here to-night? There sits, in his usual chair, old Mr. Hilliard, with a kindly smile upon his fine face, and a cheery word on his lip. There, on the other side, sits his wife, and there is a look of happiness in her eyes, which speaks a source even deeper

than his. There are the children, Tom, Nan, Emmie—each a little older than when we last saw them; and Tom, for the occasion, displaying, as all boys do, to great disadvantage, the honours of his first tail coat. But these are not all. There are two more chairs there beside the mother's seat, and in them are seated Henry Hilliard and Lizzie Exham. Yes, it was all right now. Look at Henry. There is true manly pride, which is no sin, written on every line of his face, and a smile of joy and emotion, which he cannot check, rises every moment there. Look at Lizzie. Although dressed in simple black, she shines bright and fresh and fair, as any flower of May. The deep blue eyes, that never spoke of guile—you need not be told where they rested most frequently, although we must confess they were often cast down timidly into her lap. The rich hair and the delicate colour set off her face as much, or more, perhaps, than absolute beauty could have done; but when peace and love are there, in our view, beauty is; and if so, Lizzie is beautiful.

Upon no happier group, we venture to say, did Yule log shed its ruddy light that Christmas evening.

From the time of Henry's conversation with his mother, the whole tone of that household began to undergo a change, soon marked by Mr. Despard, who came in to supply the place of Henry, who was at College. The fact that Henry had become more kind, happy, and good, when he professed himself a Christian, was, as far as outward *means* went, the point on which all turned. Prejudiced violently at first against his change of views, they watched him, as all professors are watched, and their opinion of his creed was derived from his life. Doubt not that the hand of God was there, to influence their minds thus. But *that* was the means He used. Henry's consistency was the champion for Henry's faith.

And then, led by slow degrees, and passing through no very marked change, Mrs. Hilliard came as one comes through twilight, "out of darkness into light," until to her too, "all things had become new."

Judge of Henry's feelings when her letter to him told all. "My son, you have won the soul of your mother. When you were here, I found out that I was a lost sinner. Since then God has taught me that that does not hinder His love; and that Christ died for sinners—died for me."

And then all things were changed. Poor Henry felt he need no longer keep his secret so closely. He knew with what different feelings his mother would probably hear now the name of Lizzie linked with the confession of her son, that he loved her. And the father was but the mouthpiece of the mother's sentiments. When she was gained over, he was too.

Verily, they who sow in tears shall reap in joy. When Henry carried, not many days after, his mother's reply to Lizzie—who, it must be owned, had not been kept long in ignorance of his secret after he had returned from home—and when they read together her hearty invitation to her to come and spend a summer month at the Copse, it would have been hard indeed to

add anything to their happiness, save in the gratification of the wish she softly breathed, "Oh, Henry, if William saw us now!"

And here they were now, for the second time, together at the Copse, for Christmas. And if the truth must be told, she was to remain there just for the time which should elapse before all was settled, and then—well, don't be too curious; they were satisfied, and so must the reader be.

Thus all was well. And the summers which have gone by since that warm day in June when Nan and Emmie stood bridesmaids to their sister, have brought new joys to that happy pair.

He has found in labour for Christ the occupation of a life, which easy circumstances have set free from other labours, to spend thus. And no month passes in which he does not find that the simple truths of salvation through faith in the atonement of Jesus, are honoured by the Spirit of God to the awakening of souls, and their entrance into the peace of God.

Our story is done. And what has it taught? We trust, in brief, that it has taught three things—that a good disposition, an amiable heart, a virtuous life, are no panaceas for the disease of the soul, SIN. Oh, that men knew this! Sin may have full possession of the man or woman against whom the voice of human reproach cannot be raised. A soul may be in the very grasp of sin, which nevertheless stands spotless before the closest scrutiny of man. It is a humiliating thought, but it is true.

Another truth which this story exhibits is this, that a *discovery* of the nature of sin, and of its rule within us, is, if not universally, at least most generally, the preliminary to a discovery of the value of the work of Christ for us. Some place *repentance* before the reception of the truth; but it is not so much *sorrow* for sin, as a keen discovery of its danger and fearful wickedness in God's sight, which prompts the soul to take hold of the offered salvation. It is the *believer* who truly repents. We must love God before we can

truly grieve for sin. So that none need delay to come to Christ, because *he has not repented enough*. Let every one who knows he has a sinful soul, look to the Sin-bearer, and that will give repentance, by giving new life towards God.

Again: when thus the Holy Spirit has showed a man his sinfulness in such a manner as makes him cry out for deliverance, he gives rest *only in Jesus*. It is not possible, under His teaching, to find rest in self—either in self-denial, or in self-amendment. Peace is a thing essentially provided *for* us, and given *to* us; not provided *by* us, or worked out within. And *faith* is the means of receiving peace, because it looks *out*, away from self, to the Peace-maker. The slave for whom a ransom has been paid is, *within*, just what he was, until he believes his ransom is paid down. It is in thinking of that, not of himself—either his deserts or his demerits—that he becomes happy.

Finally, the *immediate* result of faith in Jesus is a joyful and loving spirit. He

who believes that he is set free, and that he is no more the captive of his hated foe, *must rejoice*; it is *impossible* he should not. The next result is *usefulness*. As joy comes first, so follows the desire, the faithful outgoing of the new-born soul, to bring our friends to see the Saviour we have found. This seems to be the inseparable concomitant of peace received. Christianity is dead when it stands still. A true believer lives to bring others near.

Reader, have you found out you are a sinner?

Do you believe in your heart in the Lord Jesus?

Have you joy in believing?

Are you seeking the salvation of souls?

THE END.







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